AIR FORCE LEGENDS NUMBER 207

NORTH AMERICAN SABRE DOG PART TWO

USAF F-86D/L

BY DUNCAN CURTIS

INTRODUCTION:

Air Force Legends Number 207 is the second volume in the North American F-86D/K/L Sabre Dog series and covers the United States Air Force usage of the F-86D/Ls. Volume three will cover Air National Guard operators of F-86D/Ls and Foreign service of the F-86D/K/L. Volume one chronicaled the aircraft's design, structures and testing.

Duncan Curtis has taken on the task of documenting the Air Force's operational history of the F-86D/L in this volume. He previously authored Naval Fighters Number 58, North American QF-86 Sabre Drones, and F-86 Sabre from Crowood Press. Mr. Curtis specializes in the North American Sabre and maintains an F-86 website at f-86.tripod.com

Author's Acknowledgements

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Finally, to my brother Howard, whose help through the years has been immeasurable.

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Steve Ginter, 1754 Warfield Cir., Simi Valley, California, 93063

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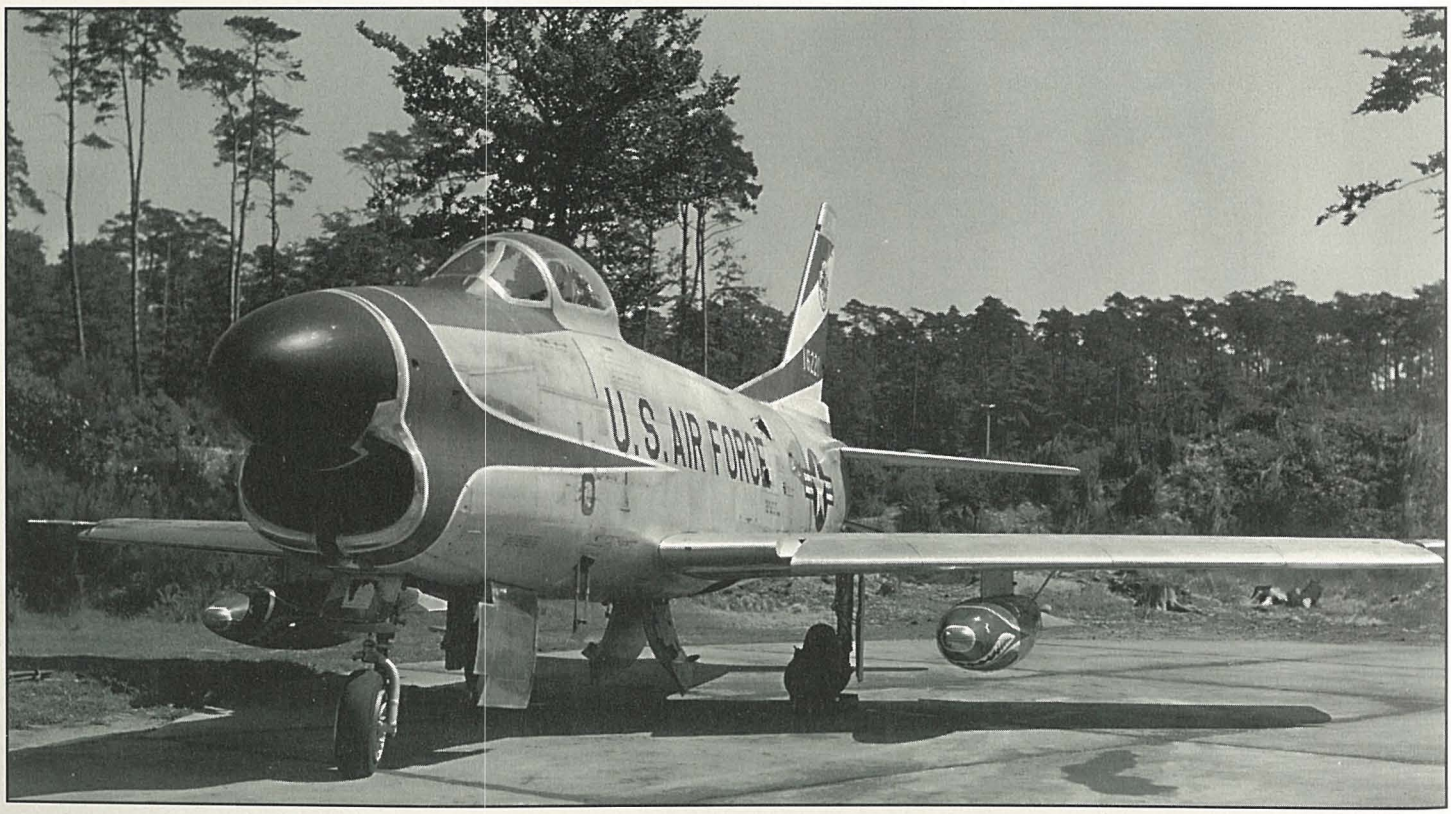
FRONT COVER:

4th FIS Sabre Dog 52-4024 was the squadron commander's aircraft and is seen at Misawa AB in Japan. A Japanese Ground Self Defense Force soldier guards the aircraft. '024 was passed on to the Japanese in 1961 and is now displayed at Matsushima. (Otto Loorents)

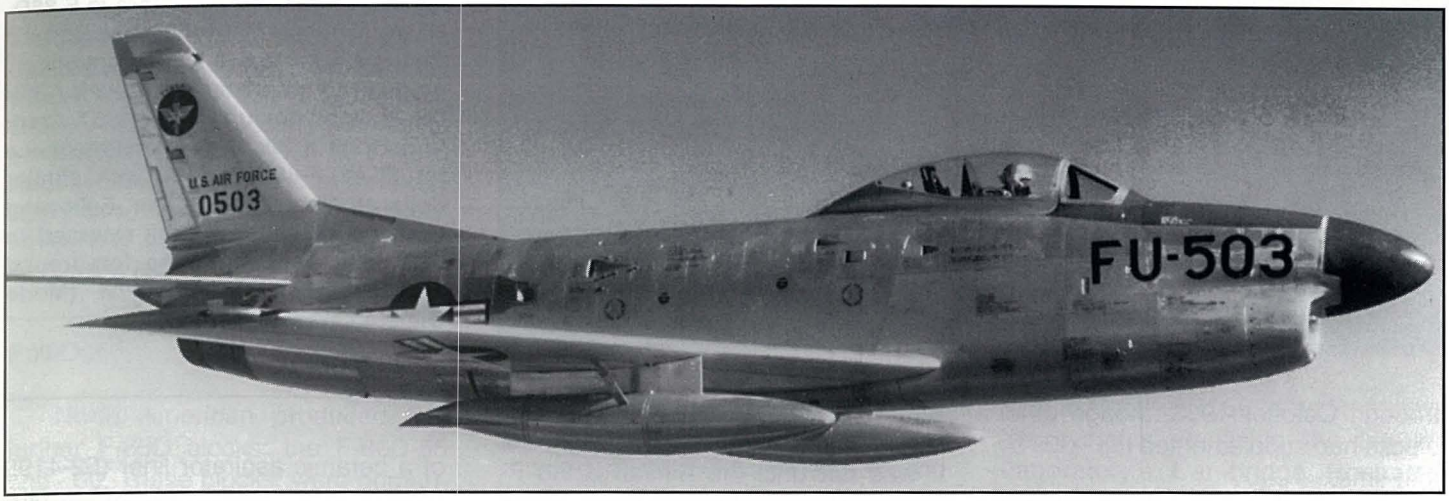
BACK COVER:

Left side top to bottom, 97th FIS with famous red Devil Cat markings. (Ron Picciani) 512th FIS Sabre Dog 52-4185 during 1957. (Jack Friell) 525th FIS 51-8377 belonged to the 86th FIW in 1957. (R. Anderson via Isham) 513th FIS 52-4140 while assigned to the 86th FIW in 1958. (Jack Friell) 329th FIS F-86D 53-677. (J. Michaels via Isham) 526th F-86D-36 was painted in the markings of squadron commander LtCol William Brierty. (Jerome P. Burton)

Right side top to bottom, 1955 markings on 13th FIS Sabre Dog. (LtCol Edgar M. Lewis) 86th FIW Headquarters Flight in May 1959. (Jerry Kishpaugh via Kaston) 15th FIS F-86D-41 52-3722. (R. Waddell via Isham) 496th FIS F-86D-45 52-3944 in early squadron markings. (via Larry Davis, Isham collection) 332nd FIS Sabre in flight. (USAF) 498th FIS F-86D 53-866 in 1956. (K. Lotz via Isham)



OPERATIONAL HISTORY OF USAF F-86D/L BY DUNCAN CURTIS



Above, the 3625th FTW at Tyndall AFB was the first USAF unit to receive F-86Ds for the flight training mission. Initial deliveries began in June 1952 and 50-503, an F-86D-5, was assigned on 26 August. "Tyndall" was painted on the tail on 3625th aircraft above the Air Training Command (ATC) badge. (USAF)

INTRODUCTION

F-86D Deliveries to USAF units

Though it was accepted by the USAF in March 1951, the initial F-86D-1, 50-455, did not make its first flight until 8 June 1951, and many of this initial batch of Sabre Dogs were immediately slated for test work. In order to commence training of F-86D crews, the 3625th Flying Training Wing at Tyndall AFB in Florida began to gear up, accepting its first F-86D in June 1952, and by the end of the year, the unit had been assigned sixteen F-86D-1s under Project TRC-1PF-869. Ground training units also received F-86D-1s at this time, including the 3345th Technical Training Wing at Chanute AFB, Illinois.

The next block of aircraft on the production line was the F-86D-5, and again, the first deliveries were bailed back to NAA for testing; remaining –5s were assigned to 3200th Proof Test Group at Eglin and 3625th FTW at Tyndall. The final F-86D-5s were delivered in January 1953, despite having been available since July the previous year.

The F-86D-10 block comprised thirty-six aircraft, and starting in February 1953, 3555th Flying Training Wing at Perrin AFB Texas began to receive aircraft from this batch. It was assigned the first pair of new-build D-10s on 4 February, with further aircraft arriving at Perrin through June.

Starting with 50-554, the fifty-four F-86D-15s were mainly assigned straight to flying training units, though at last, with the D-15, active USAF squadrons began to receive the F-86D. On paper, the 94th Fighter Interceptor Squadron (FIS) at George AFB in California was the first unit to receive the F-86D, having been assigned eighteen under ADC Project 3F213 during February 1953 for accelerated service testing. However, with completion of testing, most of these Sabres were reassigned to other units within a couple of weeks. Thus, it fell to 323rd FIS at Larson AFB in Washington State to bring the type into service, and the unit gained two F-86D-15s on 15 April 1953.

NAA then began to come up to speed in the delivery of the backlog of early-model F-86Ds; this coincided with the completion of deliveries to 3625th CCTW at Tyndall. For the first few months, each new squadron to receive the F-86D was assigned 12 to 14 aircraft before a further unit received the next dozen or so. Therefore, the third USAF unit to receive The F-86D, the 95th FIS at Andrews AFB, Maryland, received its first aircraft in early May 1953, the day after the 323rd FIS had been assigned its twelfth machine. This system continued for successive squadrons, and after the 95th FIS, the 62nd FIS received Sabre Dogs in mid-May, followed by 71st FIS (late May), 60th FIS (early June), 97th FIS (mid-June), 432nd FIS (mid-June), 42nd FIS (mid-June) and 465th FIS (late June).

The first 51-Fiscal Year F-86D-20s had been accepted by the Air Force back in December 1952, and many were assigned to the still expanding flying training commitment. Further examples did start to trickle out to the active squadrons, beginning with the 2nd FIS at McGuire AFB, New Jersey, in mid-1953.

The F-86D-25 was the first model to have provision for jettisonable drop tanks, and first deliveries were made to the 323rd FIS from 1 May 1953, followed by the 4750th Training Group at Yuma and other ADC units such as the 62nd FIS and the 95th FIS.

Delivery of F-86D-30s, which introduced an automatic approach control system, began on 1 May 1953, again with the 323rd FIS. ADC deliveries of this batch continued

At left, the 94th FIS at George AFB was the first operational Air Force unit to receive the F-86D. Seen here is F-86D-50 serial number 52-10094. (via Burger) Below left, these two F-86Ds are undergoing IRAN maintenance at Clark AB in the Philippines during July 1957. Clark undertook a lot of such maintenance for FEAF F-86Ds, along with similar units at Kisarazu in Japan. Following overhaul, 52-3971 in back returned to 51st FIW, 51-6251 in the foreground was assigned to 35th FIW (Merle Olmsted via McLaren)

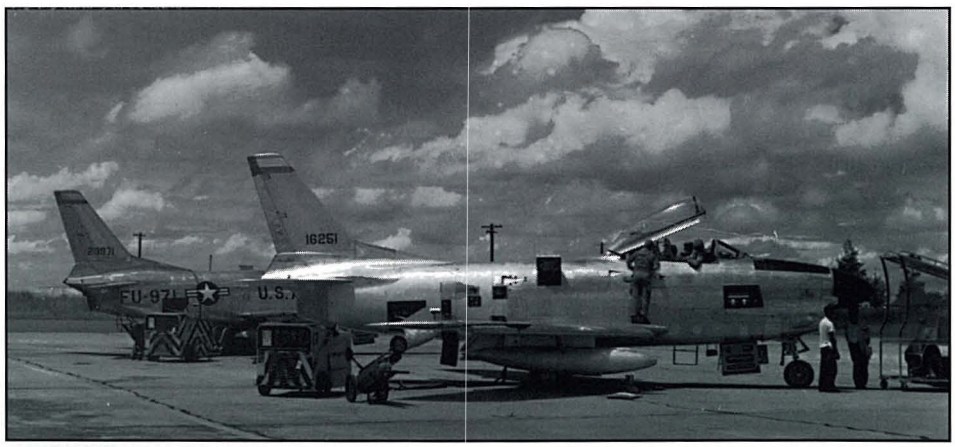
through October 1953, though other blocks had supplemented the –30s by that time.

Beginning with the F-86D-35, an AN/ARN-14 omni-directional range set was installed, as well as an external receptacle for inverter ground power in the right-hand nose area. Additionally, the rudder trim tab system was reintroduced in favor of the power boost of the D-10 to 30 production blocks. First deliveries of –35s were made to the 13th and the 496th FIS on 10 July 1953.

On the F-86D-40, a fuel flow meter replaced the earlier engine fuel pressure gauge, and further cockpit refinements included the addition of an electrical face mask defrost. All D-40s except 52-3598 to –3847 deleted the wing-root gun camera, and the model introduced the AN/ARN-18 glide path receiver in place of the earlier AN/ARN-5B item. Assignment of these aircraft began in early December 1953 with the 37th FIS and the 87th FIS.

These relatively small batches of aircraft marked continuing refinements to the basic F-86D design, but it was not until the arrival of the F-86D-45 that a definitive 'Dog' rolled off North American's production line. Testing led to the installation of drag parachutes to all aircraft beginning with the F-86D-45 batch, and externally these could be recognized by a flattened drag chute housing at the base of the rudder. Engine improvements were also slotted into D-45 production, the first 238 D-45s introducing the J47-GE-17B with 7,500-lb. thrust, while remaining F-86D-45 and subsequent models were equipped with the J47-GE-33 with a dry thrust of 5500 pounds and 7650 pounds with afterburner. The first D-45s were delivered in April 1954 and were flown straight to McClellan AFB in preparation for overseas shipment. Most aircraft in this block were initially assigned to USAF Europe (USAFE) and to Far East Air Forces (FEAF).

The F-86D-50 model differed only slightly from the previous model: modified engine oil drains, brake chute (52-10026 and on) and addition of a ceramic aspirator liner (52-4198 to -10025) setting them apart. Delivery started in August 1954 with many going to USAFE and FEAF; others did however pass straight to ADC units.



Thus, by the end of 1953, there were a number of different production blocks of F-86Ds in service, each differing from each other in respect of spare parts, instruction manuals, and maintenance procedures. This made maintenance and repair of the F-86D a logistics nightmare and Air Defense Command initiated Project Lock On to verify the effectiveness of ADC's various weapons systems, including the F-86D. In order to make the various production blocks of the F-86D standard throughout the USAF, a decision was made to initiate Project Pull-Out, which withdrew all pre-F-86D-45 models from service and upgraded them to F-86D-45 standard. Work was centered at North American's Fresno, California, plant, with other conversions carried out at the McClellan AFB Sacramento Air Material Area. The pre-D-45 models were fitted with braking parachutes (standard on the F-86D-45), and all models had uncompleted Technical Orders and modifications completed prior to dispatch to operational units. In total 1,128 F-86Ds went through 'Pull-Out', which was completed in September 1955. In order to differentiate the modified aircraft, their block numbers were changed, so that D-10 to D-40 airframes became dash-11, 16, 21, 26, 31, 36, and 41 machines, respectively. Few, if any, F-86D-1 or –5 Sabres were subjected to Project

At right, at least two F-86Ds were assigned to the 86th FIW HQ Flight at Ramstein, Germany; these were 52-4151 seen here and 52-4140. They were painted in dark blue and yellow-orange trim. Aircraft was parked at Athens, Greece, in May 1959. (Jerry Kishpaugh via Kaston) Bottom, F-86L 53-0792 in August 1958. The 94th FIS at Selfridge AFB was among the first USAF squadrons to receive the F-86L. (A. Bruder via Isham)

Pull-Out.

North American produced two further F-86D blocks; the F-86D-55 and –60. These blocks: were primarily purchased to equip and upgrade Air Defense Command wings in the Continental United States. The F-86D-55 introduced an Alternate Hydraulic System accumulator dump valve (53-707 and on), the inverter external power receptacle was relocated to the right-hand aft fuselage area, AN/ARC-34 UHF command radio replaced the AN/ARC-27, and lap belts were fitted that opened automatically after ejection. The first F-86D-55s were delivered in November 1954 and the first aircraft were assigned to the 60th FIS at Westover AFB, the 83rd FIS at Paine AFB and the 97th FIS at Wright-Patterson.

The F-86D-60 began delivery in March 1955 and further relocated the inverter external power receptacle, this time to the underside of the fuselage from 53-857 onwards. All D-60s featured modified wing attachment fittings, and incorporated provision for an AN/APX-25 identification radar (IFF) set. These machines went to squadrons including the 94th FIS at George AFB and the 325th FIS at Hamilton AFB. The final F-86D, 53-4090, was delivered to the Air Force in September 1955.

PROJECT ARROW

In 1955, the United States Air Force initiated Project Arrow, a major realignment under which dispersed squadrons would be returned to the traditional parent Groups or Wings to which they were assigned during WWII and before. This immense project was considerably simplified by transferring these units 'less personnel and equipment'. Thus, instead of moving a squadron bodily to the home base of its traditional parent wing, in most cases, a squadron on that particular base would change its designation. Most squadrons affected were in Air Defense Command, and of the Sabre squadrons involved, all were US-based F-86D units. The date chosen was 18 August 1955, and overnight, tens of squadrons gained new identities. In some cases, units were inactivated to make way for historically important organizations to be concurrently reactivated. Thus in the squadron listings, 18 August 1955 crops up many times as a 'reassignment', 'inactivation' or 'activation' date.

F-86L Deliveries to USAF Units

Development of the F-86L is detailed in Vol. 1, conversion of F-86Ds under Project Follow-On (Air Materiel Command Project 6F375) centering on North American's Inglewood and Fresno plants as well as at Sacramento Air Materiel Area, McClellan AFB. The first F-86Ls were assigned to the 49th FIS at Hanscom AFB in October 1956 to begin testing the systems alongside the Lincoln Laboratory's Cambridge Research Center. By the end of that year, further squadrons had also received F-86Ls, including the 62nd FIS at O'Hare International Airport, the 94th FIS at Selfridge AFB and the 331st FIS at Stewart AFB.

In line with the active duty units, the flying training squadrons also began to re-equip with the F-86L, under Air Training Command Project 7F205, starting with the 3625th Combat Crew Training Wing (CCTW) at Tyndall AFB in July 1957. The other two main F-86D/L training units, the 3550th CCTW at Moody AFB and the 3555th CCTW at Perrin AFB, received their first F-86Ls in December 1957. Tyndall's F-86L training ceased in late 1957, and during August 1958, the remaining CCTW's became Flying Training Wings (FTW). With the drawdown in F-86L operations, the remaining training units relinquished their Sabres in 1960: the 3555th FTW in April and the 3550th FTW in November of that year.

F-86D/L Deliveries to the Air National Guard

As Convair F-102A and later F-106A interceptors became available to the Air Defense Command, USAF F-86Ds began to filter down to the Air National Guard (ANG) units, but it was not until 1957 that sufficient surplus aircraft were available to begin the process. First unit to receive F-86Ds was the 173rd FIS Nebraska ANG, based at Lincoln Municipal Airport. The squadron received F-86Ds in May 1957, converting from F-80C Shooting Stars. Also during 1957, the 111th and the 181st FIS Texas ANG squadrons received F-86Ds, along with the 125th and the 185th FIS Oklahoma ANG. Ten ANG squadrons had received F-86Ds by May 1958, but by this time F-86Ls had also become available, and a number of other Guard squadrons converted straight onto this aircraft without receiving any D-models.

The first ANG F-86L unit was the 108th FIS Illinois ANG, based at O'Hare International Airport. The squadron gained its first aircraft in December 1957, having previously flown the F-84F. National Guard F-86Ds were gradually phased out in 1960, the 196th FIS California ANG flying on with the 'Dog' until March 1961, having received F-86Ls in the previous month. Flying only F-86Ds, the 198th FIS Puerto Rico ANG re-equipped with the type in February 1959, and flew these until November 1960. Conversely, the 199th FIS Hawaii ANG operated only F-86Ls, and gained aircraft specially converted for the squadron from December 1957. Like their Air Force counterparts, the ANG F-86Ls were ultimately replaced by the F-102A Delta Dagger, and in the 1960/61 period, many squadrons finally lost their Sabres for good. By early 1962, only six F-86L units remained in ANG service: the 124th FIS Iowa ANG, the 173rd FIS Nebraska ANG, the 181st FIS Texas ANG, the 190th FIS Idaho ANG, the 194th FIS California ANG and the 196th FIS California ANG. The 196th became the last unit to operate the type, converting to F-102s in the summer of 1965.

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE F-86D/L UNITS

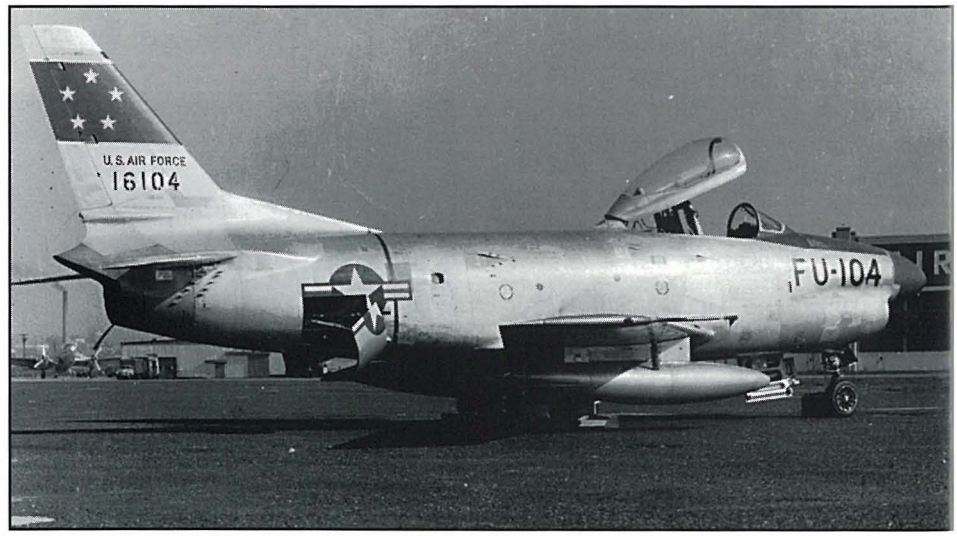
2ND FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

The 2nd FIS at McGuire AFB, NJ, converted from the F-94 to the F-86D during 1953, receiving its first Sabre on 3 August that year. The latter were all pre-Pull-Out models and remained with the squadron until August of 1954 when the first Pull-Out-modified aircraft were gained, all coming from NAA's Fresno facility. These modified aircraft were mainly F-86D-26 and –31 models, which were in turn replaced with brand-new 53-fiscal year F-86Ds from April 1955. The 2nd FIS was assigned to the 568th ADG until 8 July 1954 when it was transferred to the control of the 4709th ADW.

Under Project Arrow the squadron was relocated "less personnel and equipment" to Suffolk County AFB, NY, taking over aircraft and crews from the 75th FIS on 18 August 1955. The 'new' 2nd FIS gained mainly 53-fiscal year F-86Ds, and one was lost before the end of the year. On 27 December 53-1015, piloted by Capt Theodore B Buechler, crashed into a residential area at Levittown, Long Island. Buechler ejected safely and landed just three blocks away from his burning Sabre. No one on the ground was hurt. Capt Buechler had experienced control difficulties at 35,000 feet on an afternoon training mission. His aircraft then caught fire and he was forced to leave the stricken F-86.

The F-86Ds were retained until November 1956 when most were sent for F-86L conversion. The squadron then began flying the F-102A. During its time at Suffolk County, the 2nd FIS was assigned to the 52nd FG. Motto: Second to None.

Below, the 2nd FIS was one of many units to adopt the five star tail markings seen here. The background color was red. F-86D-30 51-6104 was delivered to the squadron in August 1953 and is seen here at Boston's Logan Airport. (Tom Curry via Isham)



4TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Operating from Naha AB on Okinawa, the 4th FIS moved into Misawa Air Base in Japan on 1 August 1954 to re-equip from F-94 Starfires to the F-86D. The majority of the squadron's initial complement of aircraft were F-86D-45s – equipped as standard with a braking parachute- and arrived starting on 9 September. Otto Loorents was a hydraulics specialist with the 4th FIS and arrived at Misawa in October 1954. He recalls that, compared with the Japanese state of the art, North American's electronics seemed decidedly out of date:

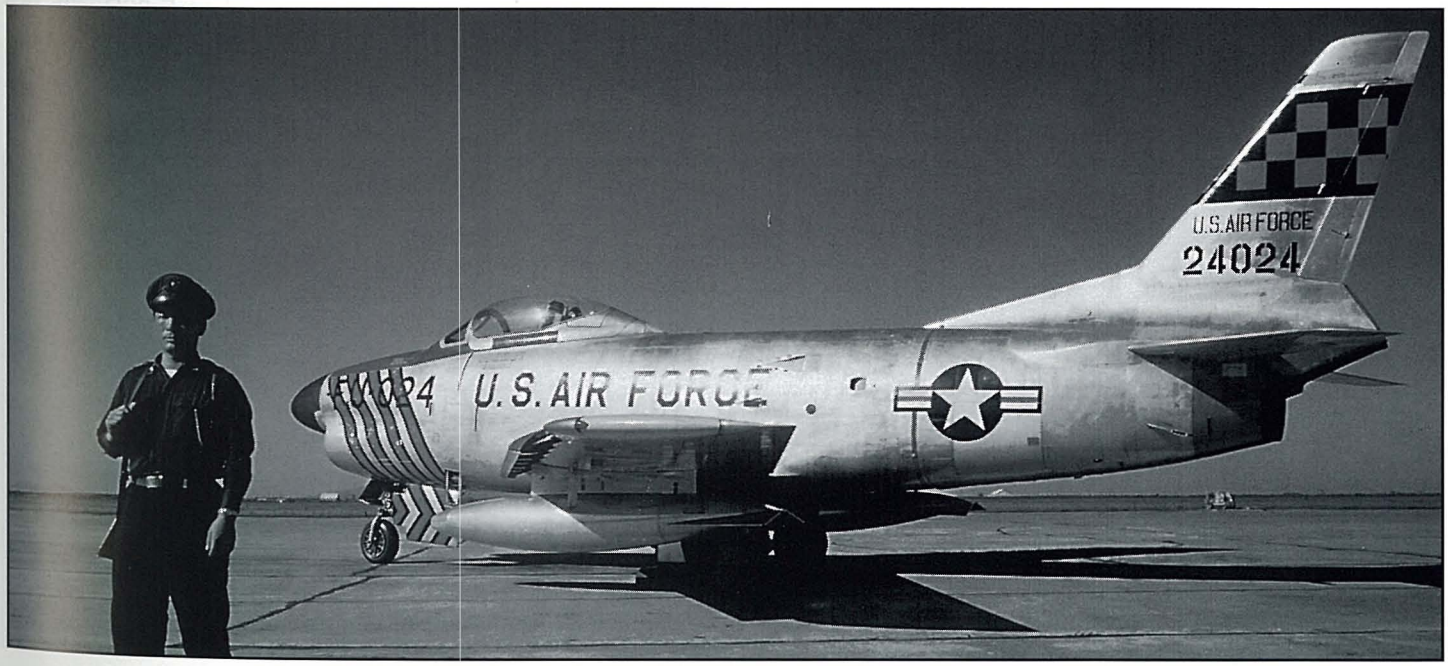
"The search radar and electronic fuel control were quite sophisticated for the time and relied on vacuum tube technology as solid state electronics were not available at that time. As an aside, we could buy on the local Japanese market the neatest little transistor radios for about $10, not to mention what the Japanese were doing to the German camera industry with their Canon and Nikon 35mm cameras."

Inevitably, the squadron pilots were eager to sample the delights of swept-wing flying, and wasted no time in doing so:

"The D could go supersonic, and apparently did so on New Year's Eve 1954. It seems the D dove over the base to boom it at midnight to celebrate the arrival of 1955. The only thing I can verify is the boom at midnight and the following morning seeing a slightly wrinkled F-86D in the hangar. The wings had a decided increase in dihedral and the fuselage the afore-mentioned wrinkle. Things were very quiet on the subject and the plane was not seen again. I can only guess that excessive Gs were pulled in the pull-out. The plane only had about 25 hours on it!"

Otto also remembers that in the spring of 1955, North American sent out its public relations people to convince the Sabre pilots that their new

Above, 4th FIS F-86D-45 The "Vomit Comet" is being prepped for a mission alongside a sistership. (via Ray Wagner) Below, F-86D-45 52-4024 was the squadron commanders aircraft, guarded at Misawa AB by a JGSDF soldier. All trim was red and black. 024 was transferred to the Japanese in 1961 and is now displayed at Matsushima. (Otto Loorents)



At left, 52-3956 served with the 4th FIS from, October 1954 to July 1959. The pilots name on the canopy rail, LT Bruce Keene, was painted over a yellow bar. Aircraft was at Misawa on 1 February 1956. (via Norm Taylor) Below left, the Playboy bunny logo was added to 52-4000 in 1956. (via Norm Taylor) Bottom, pilots' names on 52-4042 was Capt. Bob Eichenberg and on 52-4032 it was Lt Jack Kolkebeck, flight commander. The names were painted on yellow backgrounds. (Otto Loorents)

interceptor could hack it:

> **"The Ds were still new to the pilots in the spring of 1955 and some of them did not have the confidence in the craft that they should have. At that time the USAF lost a lot of experienced pilots due to the end of hostilities in Korea. North American sent over a team of demonstration pilots and did a tour of squadrons using the Ds. The show that was done at Misawa was something to behold. A short field take-off started the show, a 20-minute beat-up of the field followed, [and] a simulated aborted landing followed by a short field landing. After the plane landed and we chocked the wheels [it] had a smell that I will not forget. And it was 'clicking' for about 20 minutes."**

The 4th FIS began to re-equip with F-102As in March 1960, many of the F-86Ds going to the Japanese Air Self Defense Force. The last Sabre departed the unit on 17 August 1960. The 4th FIS was initially assigned to the 6351st ABW, then to the 39th AD on 10th August 1954, being jointly controlled under JASDF and USAF 5th Air Force until 1 March 1955 when the 39th AD took over control.

One further incident does deserve a mention, however. On 14 September 1960, a good month after the last F-86D was 'officially' retired from service, a 4th FIS F-86D pilot reported a UFO encounter. He had been flying between an undercast sky and higher level cloud when he saw a greenish-white spherical object appear above him. The object fell straight down and disappeared into the undercast below him. The incident was recorded in the 39th Air Division records and is puzzling not only for the nature of the report, but also its mention of an F-86D with the 4th FIS at a time when the unit should have been fully equipped with F-102s.

5TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

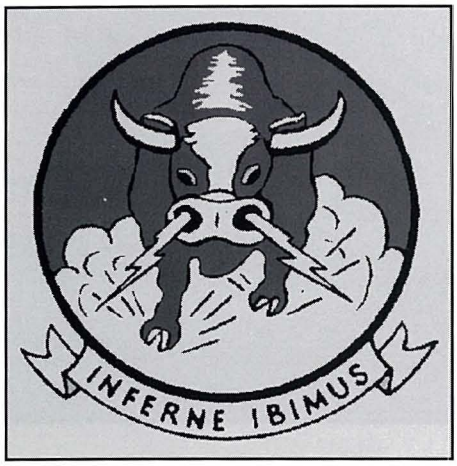
The 5th FIS converted from the F-94 to the F-86D in 1953, receiving its first Sabre in mid-September. The squadron had a lucky break on 10 August 1954 when two of its Sabres collided in mid-air over Lakewood, NJ. Part of a 3-ship formation flown from McGuire in the early evening, two aircraft (51-3033 and 6224) flown by 1stLt Frank M White and 2ndLt Ernest Borden collided at 7.28 p.m. They had been flying at 15,000 feet and both pilots were very fortunate in being able to eject. They were subsequently taken to Lakewood police headquarters to recover from the shock of their ordeal.

Meanwhile, 2ndLt Daniel Hunter, in the remaining Sabre of the three, was able to radio McGuire and rescue crews were soon on the scene of the accident. The F-86Ds crashed two miles apart near the Lakewood-Toms River road and were destroyed.

From October 1954 Fresno-modified Project Pull-Out F-86D-26s began to replace the earlier models, and in December the first F-86D-36s arrived from McClellan AFB. Newer 53-fiscal year F-86Ds were delivered from April 1955, though these then became 539th FIS assets under Project Arrow in August 1955.

The 5th FIS was based at McGuire AFB, NJ, until 18 August 1955, when the 331st FIS at Suffolk County AFB, NY, transformed into the new 5th FIS, flying mostly F-86D-36, -41 and –45 aircraft. Detachments were flown at Yuma AFB from 17 October to 16 November 1955, and from 15 August to 16 October 1956. Soon after return from the last deployment, the 5th FIS began converting to the F-102A, losing its last Sabre in April 1957. The 5th FIS was initially assigned to the 568th ADG, then to the 4709th ADW on 8 July 1954 and subsequently to the 52nd FG on 18 August 1955.

Above, Sabre Dogs of the 5th FIS shared similar tail markings to those of the 2nd FIS, a fellow 568th ADGp unit. In late 1953, this F-86D-35 is midway through gaining a pilot's name on the canopy rail. (AJ Jackson collection) Below, soon after the 5th moved (less personnel and equipment) to Suffolk County AFB in August 1955, it adopted yellow as its primary color, though retaining a similar tail design. A red heart with a yellow ribbon was painted on the fuselage side. (LtCol E. Bosetti via Marty Isham)



11TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Activated on 1 December 1952 with the F-51 Mustang, the 11th FIS was based at Duluth Municipal Airport, MN, and assigned to the 515th Air Defense Group. The first F-86Ds were received at the end of August 1953, comprising mainly F-86D-30 and –35 aircraft.

The unit lost its first Sabre (51-8288) in a crash on 12 December 1953 and three days later a second aircraft was written off. This machine was 51-8489, piloted by Karl Gruber, a 24-year-old Second Lieutenant with just 15 hours on the Sabre. Gruber had experienced a violent oscillation on take-off (described as a 'Jesus Christ' or 'JC' maneuver), after which field personnel informed him that his aircraft was trailing vapor. It later transpired that the JC maneuver had broken a valve in the end of the center wing fuel tank; the vapor visible was fuel streaming from the tank. Gruber managed to recover his aircraft to Duluth with no further damage, but almost as soon as he had jumped from the cockpit a fire broke out, caused by leaking fuel contacting the hot brake discs. Unfortunately, though the fire crews were on the scene within 60 seconds, their equipment malfunctioned and the aircraft was burnt up.

The pre-Pull-Out Sabres were replaced by modified F-86D-31s and –36s from McClellan AFB in August 1954. On 2 October, the unit lost its third Sabre, 51-6027, which crashed 10 miles northwest of Duluth following an in-flight explosion. Pilot 1stLt Wayne Veatch managed to crash land the aircraft on a highway, but the aircraft hit a billboard on the approach and was wrecked. Veatch survived, but with major injuries.

Above, the end result of 2ndLt Karl Gruber's accident on 15 December 1953. The aircraft was a write-off. (Craig Fuller)

One rocket-firing detachment to Yuma was undertaken, from 6 January to 8 February 1955. Under Project Arrow, the 11th FIS became an F-89 unit, and on 18 August 1955, the F-86Ds passed to 519th FIS control.

13TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Activated on 27 April 1953 with the F-86D, the 13th FIS was based at

Above, 13th FIS Sabres wore this color scheme in 1955. Tail flash was orange with black trim and large squadron insignia. Some aircraft did not have the black trim. (LtCol Edgar M. Lewis)

Selfridge AFB in MI. The first Sabres – brand-new F-86D-30 and –35 aircraft – were not received until mid-July however. By the end of October the unit was fully-equipped with a mix of early-model F-86Ds. As these aircraft were then routed into Pull-Out conversion at the end of 1954, new F-86D-55 and –60 models replaced them.

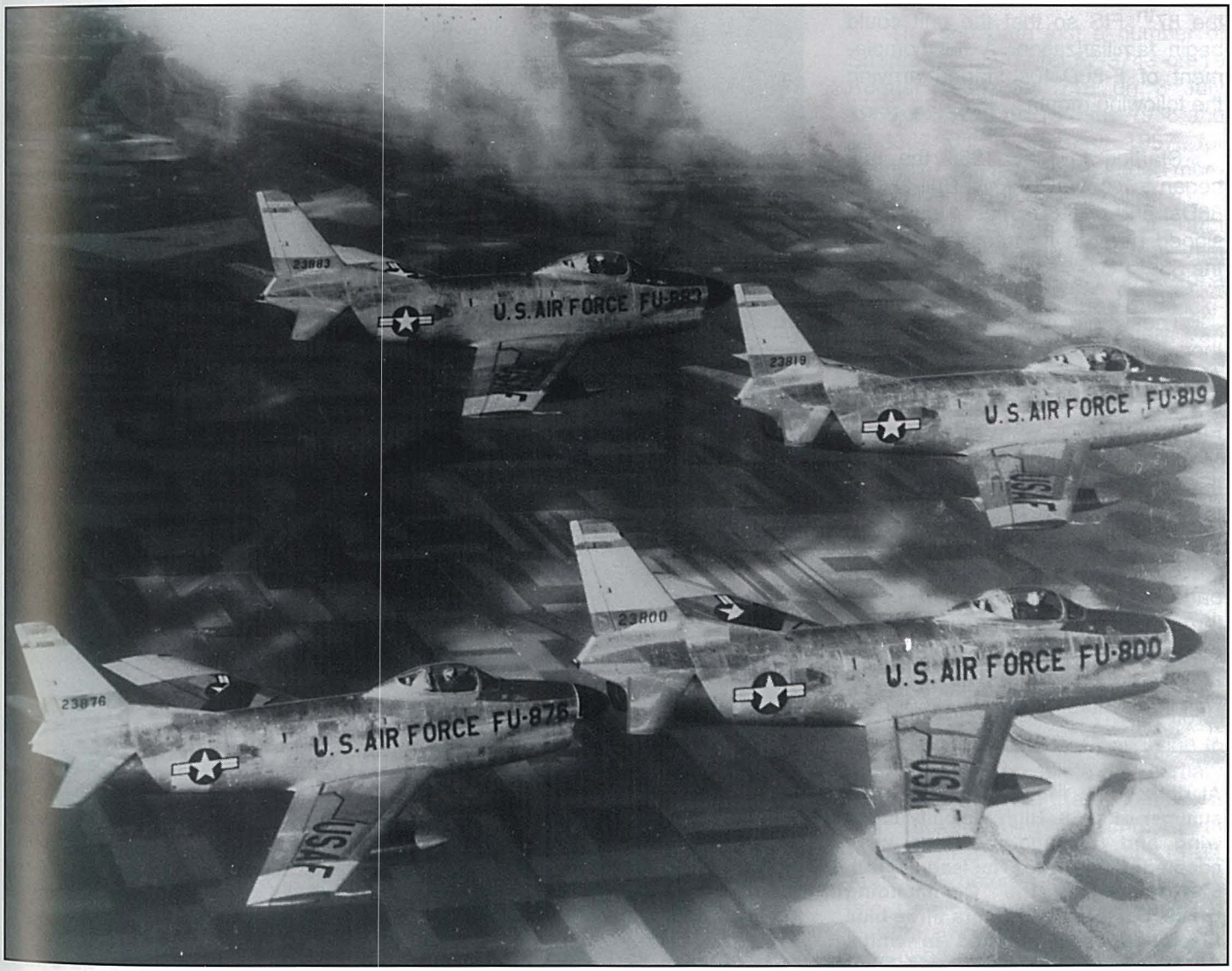
Jared Potvin explains that it was not just the aircraft that were new:

"We activated the 13th FIS at Selfridge in 1953 [and] received the D model 86 some two months later. 80% of the airmen were fresh from Tech schools, 80% of the pilots from Flight Schools as 2nd Lieutenants. In 1954 we won the first air defense rocket meet at Otis to represent Eastern AD at Yuma in the first Air Force rocket meet - placed # 2.

Project Arrow moved the squadron number to Sioux City Municipal Airport on 18 August 1955, taking over the 519th FIS F-86D assets there. The 71st FIS took over the Sabres at Selfridge. The initial unit commander at Sioux City was Maj. William H. Stewart, followed by Maj. Frank Gallagher (interim), LtCol. Wilfred B. Crutchfield and finally Lt Col. Robert M. Bell. Now under 53rd Fighter Group control, the 13th FIS began to replace its F-86Ds with newly converted F-86L Sabres from August 1957 alongside its sister unit, the 14th FIS. A live firing detachment at the re-named Vincent AFB took place from 11 April to 10 May 1958.

By now commanded by LtCol Robert M. Bell, the 13th FIS gradually lost its remaining F-86Ls from May 1959, re-equipping with F-101B Voodoos at its new base, Glasgow AFB, MT, on 2 July 1959. The 13th FIS was initially assigned to the 575th ADG, then to the 53rd FG on 18 August 1955, then to the 476th FG on 1 July 1957. Motto: None Shall Excel Them.

Below, the 13th FIS was unusual in employing orange (not da-glo) as its primary squadron color. This late summer 1956 quartet of F-86D-41s have orange tail fin and wing tip bands, but lack the squadron insignia often seen on the fin. (USAF via Don Loosley, Isham collection)



14TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON.

The 14th FIS was activated under the 521st Air Defense Group control on 18 November 1953 at Sioux City Municipal Airport, Iowa. It did not begin to receive F-86Ds until February 1954, however, when a single F-86D-35 was transferred from the 87th FIS so that the unit could begin familiarization. A full complement of F-86D-40s started arriving the following month.

Starting in May 1955 the unit began to convert to Post-Pull-Out F-86Ds, and on 18 August 1955 reassigned back to its traditional group, the 53rd FG.

The whole group at Sioux City then began to convert to F-86Ls in August 1957 (one of the last front-line units to do so), and many of the 14th FIS's old F-86Ds were transferred to McClellan AFB. In late January 1958 the 14th FIS deployed to Vincent AFB for one month's rocket firing.

By March of 1960, orders for disbanding the squadron had come through, and the F-86Ls were ferried out to the 185th FIS, Oklahoma ANG at Will Rogers Field. The 14th FIS was inactivated on 1 April 1960.

At right, three 14th FIS F-86Ls in the summer of 1958. High visibility daglo wing and fuselage markings were adopted at this time. The lead aircraft, 52-10166, was the Commanding Officer's aircraft and wears three blue fuselage bands trimmed in white. (USAF / Steve Gilbert via Marty Isham)

Above, this 14th FIS F-86D-41 was flown by the 20th Air Division Commanding Officer during the 1956 USAF rocketry meet at Yuma. "City of Sioux City" lettering and outline to the 20th AD comet design were red. Tail design was blue and yellow, as were fuselage stripes. The comet design and pilot's name placard on the canopy rail were yellow. The squadron insignia was located on the vertical tail. (W. M. Jefferies via Isham) Below, F-86L-50 52-4271, trimmed in blue and white, was the personal aircraft of Maj J. B. Brooks. Lightning flash on the nose was (from top) red-white-blue. The insignia on the fin was a mixture of yellow and dark blue with a red-white-blue lightning flash bisecting it. Fin was dark blue. (Menard via Isham)

15TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON.

Activated under the 34th Air Division on 20 April 1953, the 15th FIS based at Davis-Monthan AFB initially operated F-86As. Korean ace Lt Col Winton W. "Bones" Marshall was transferred in from the 93rd FIS to command the unit. Starting in late February 1954 the squadron was assigned its first F-86D aircraft – brand-new dash-40 models - to replace the unit's aging F-86As. However, it was not until July 1954 that the last F-86A departed the squadron.

After a short period operating the F-86D, a number of squadron personnel from the 15th FIS were selected to support the Central Air Defense Force team at the first USAF air-to-air rocketry meet. The competition was held at Yuma AFB in Arizona from 21 to 26 June 1954 and along with 93rd FIS pilots and ground crews this nascent team came in fourth overall. The following month, Maj. Hugh C. Slater took over as the squadron's Commanding Officer, having previously served as the Operations Officer for the 15th FIS. Slater served for just over a year and was in turn replaced by LtCol Walter T. Carter in August 1955.

The squadron flew out to Yuma on 8 February 1955 for 30 days of rocket firing, and upon returning to Davis-Monthan began to exchange its aircraft for modified F-86D-41s. Most of this exchange process was accomplished at McClellan AFB and the 15th FIS was fully re-equipped with drag 'chuted Sabres by the end of May.

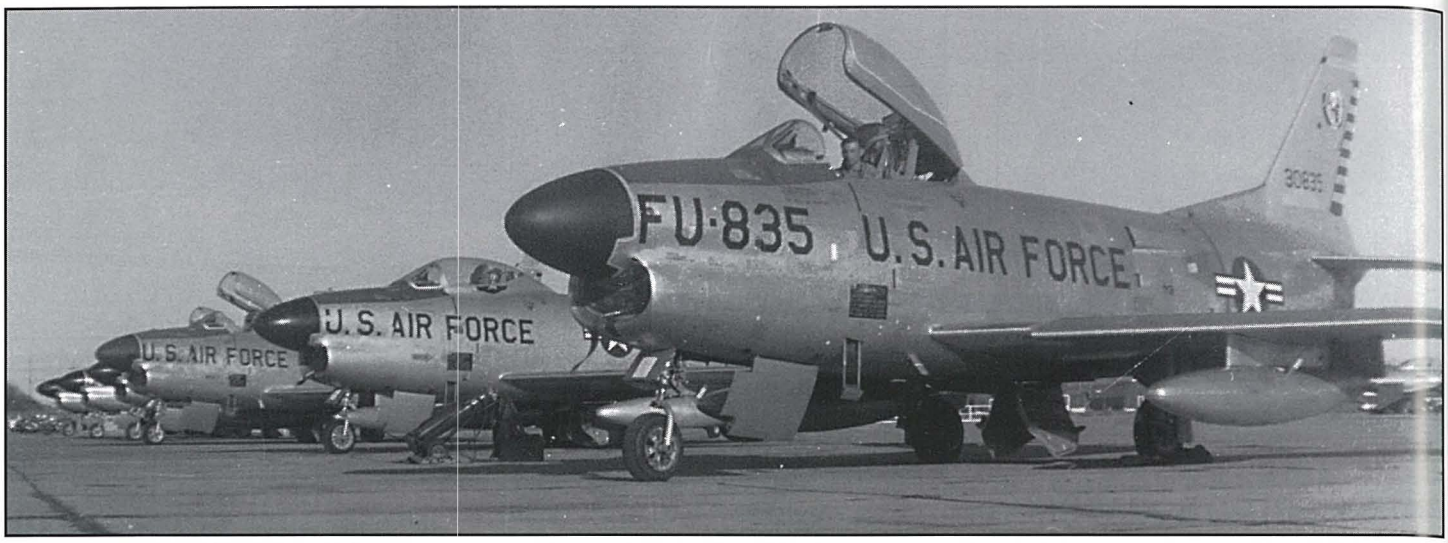
Above, F-86D-41 52-3722. Markings applied to 15th FIS Sabres were fairly muted, comprised of alternate dark blue and yellow rudder stripes. (R. Waddell via Marty Isham)

During November 1955, the 15th FIS aircraft flew in support of Operation Sagebrush, a joint Army – Air Force maneuver which took place in Louisiana and Texas. It was the largest military exercise undertaken in the United States at that point and the 15th FIS was the only ADC unit to take part. The following month, new purpose-built facilities for the squadron were accepted by the Air Force and the 15th FIS moved across the airfield into new buildings that included alert barns, maintenance support and supply infrastructures. Under LtCol Carter the squadron began to make a name for itself, and this was exemplified by the new rocket firing record it set during the May 1956 deployment to Yuma. As part of the Air Force's Operation Bootstrap education push, LtCol Carter began full-time study at the University of Arizona in September 1956 and Maj. Earl H Singleton took over as acting squadron commander.

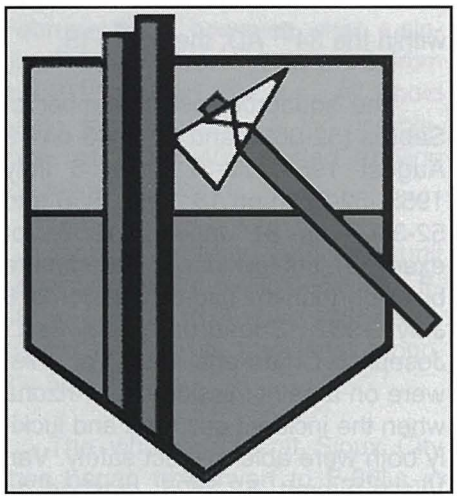
Toward the end of the 15th FIS's F-86D tenure, it flew out for a two-week long detachment to Duluth in October 1957. The squadron aircraft's markings remained muted throughout – consisting of blue and yellow stripes on the rudder with a large squadron badge positioned on the vertical stabilizer. Some aircraft did however carry 'nose art', such as 52-3620, which was named, "City of El Paso". In 1956 and 1957, the 15th FIS Sabres were regularly deployed to Kirtland AFB for short periods to operate alongside its sister squadron within the 34th AD, the 93rd FIS.

The squadron lost a number of Sabres (52-3690 and 52-3743 on 19 August 1954, 52-3718 on 3 July 1955, 52-3740 on 18 June 1956 and 52-3607 on 31 January 1957, for example), but few losses ended more bizarrely than the mid-air collision of 8 July 1957. Squadron pilots 1stLt Joseph L Onate and 1stLt Van Vliet were on a pairs mission over Arizona when the incident occurred and luckily both were able to eject safely. Van Vliet's aircraft, 52-3623, crashed on Mount Bigelow, where wreckage can still be seen today. However, the wreckage of Onate's Sabre, 52-3605, eluded discovery until a farmer at Truth or Consequences in New Mexico reported a crashed fighter. Incredibly, Onate's aircraft had somehow flown itself 350 miles away from the area before falling to earth.

At the end of August 1957, the first F-86Ls began to arrive at the 15th FIS and all F-86Ds were flown out to McClellan AFB. Conversion to the F-86L was complete by February 1958. The 15th FIS then undertook a last rocket firing detachment to Vincent AFB from 20 March to 11 April 1958 before receiving F-89Js in late 1958. The last F-86Ls departed in February 1959 bound mainly for the 192nd FIS Nevada ANG.



Above, 15th FIS F-86L flightline at Vincent AFB, Yuma, AZ, in March 1958. The aircraft retained the same basic scheme as used on the F-86Ds, though some aircraft were painted in an overall silver lacquer finish. (E. Forrest Hadley via Ben Knowles from Isham collection)



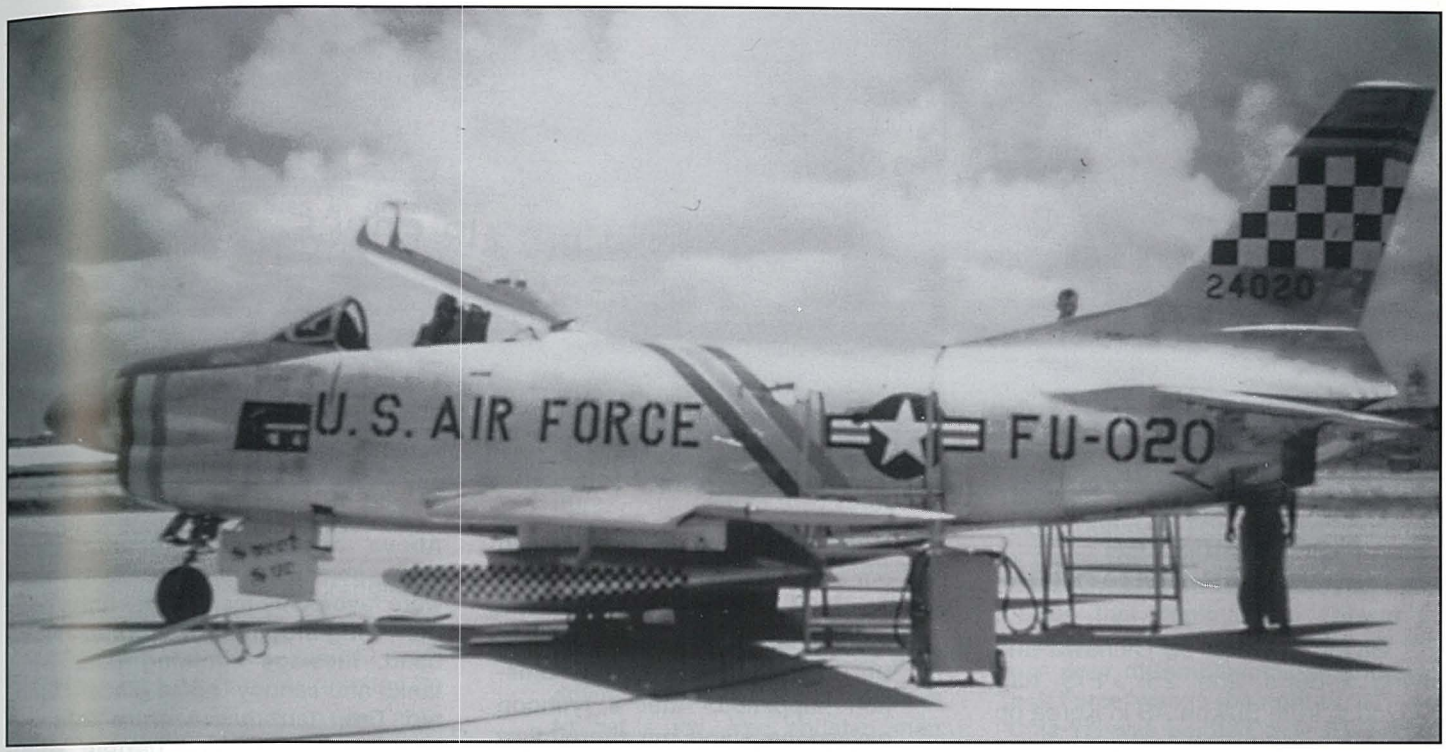
16TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Assigned to the 51st FIW of Korean War fame, the 16th FIS at Naha AB on Okinawa converted from F-86Fs to the F-86D from August 1954. Initial models were F-86D-45s, but from late 1955, a number of F-86D-36 aircraft were assigned straight from the depot at Kisarazu. The squadron's primary mission was defense of the nuclear bombers based at Okinawa.

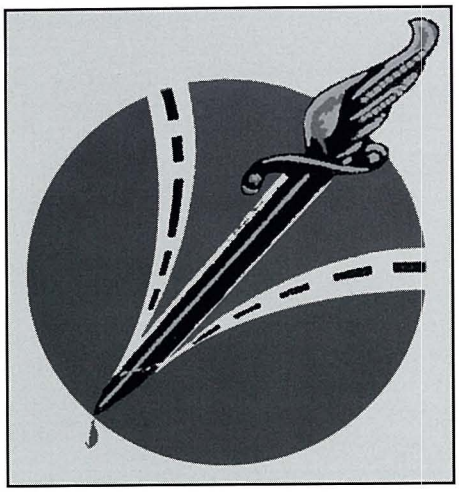
In line with a number of other FEAF Sabre units, the 16th FIS deployed on a number of occasions to cover tensions in Taiwan. One such period of TDY took the unit to Chiayi AB from 5 to 28 April 1955, returning in June 1956. The following year the 16th FIS flew to Tainan AB for another month on Taiwan from 12 February to 11 March 1957.

The 16th FIS began converting onto the F-102A Delta Dagger during 1959, and from February to March the remaining Sabres were transferred mainly to the 40th FIS on the main islands of Japan.

Below, flying over a typical oriental coastline, 51-6248 is an F-86D-36 of the 16th FIS. Nose stripe was blue outlined in white. Fin stripe above checkerboard was blue. The unit's insignia was superimposed on the checkerboard. (Duncan collection)



Above, at right, F-86D 52-4020 "Sweet Sue" was the 51st FIW Commanding Officer's aircraft assigned to the 16th FIS. The nose, fuselage and tail stripes were blue-yellow-red . Note checkerboard pattern on the wing tanks. (via Larry Davis/Isham) Below, 51st FIW squadrons carried forward the checkerboard tail markings from their F-86F days. 16th FIS nose and fin tip bands were blue. The nose stripe was outlined in white. The ground crewman is seen here spraying water into the Sabre's running engine to remove corrosive salt deposits from the compressor section. (via Norm Taylor)



25TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Based at Naha on Okinawa and flying F-86Fs, the 25th FIS had moved in from Suwon AB in Korea on 1 August 1954. The squadron was assigned to air defense of the bomber base and was assigned to the 51st FIW. The squadron's first F-86Ds arrived in August 1954.

Bud Norris was one of those unsung heroes of the USAF – the maintenance men - and looked after the aircraft's complex radar equipment:

"The 25th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, and the adjoining outfit, the 16th FIS, were both based at Naha, along with a Nike missile site, Navy patrol squadrons, etc., a mish-mash of virtually every branch of the U.S. military in some form or another. Though Okinawa is today considered part of Japan, in the 1950s it was still a U.S. possession with a myriad of military installations all over the island. Our C.O. when I arrived was a Col. Slater, old school, no-nonsense pilot who flew regularly and expected results from all personnel, whatever their job. He later became an undercover CIA agent in Vietnam."

"When I arrived there in the summer of 1957, the 25th was equipped with F-86D all-weather fighters. These normally sat outside 24 hours a day, except when in a hangar for major maintenance, or when a typhoon was headed our way, in which case they were flown to Clark AB in the Philippines until the storm passed. But in 1958, a strange phenomenon happened. After a typhoon passed the island, our aircraft flew back to the base. But then something happened which had never occurred before. The storm reversed course and headed back to Okinawa. This happened in the middle of the night while most of us were asleep. I was awakened by someone banging on the door of my room in the barracks, shouting 'everybody down to the flight line.' We dressed and ran down to the radar shop, about 4 blocks from the barracks, to be immediately pressed into sandbagging things that couldn't be put indoors, while others scrambled to get the aircraft towed into the big, typhoon-proof hangar."

"A plan had been devised on how to arrange planes in the hangar like a giant jigsaw puzzle, and dozens could be positioned inside if you had enough people on hand to do the job, and the time necessary to accomplish it. I don't think any aircraft were flown out, as they couldn't get enough pilots on the line soon enough. Next day it was discovered that a few aircraft, such as helicopters and C-47s, had been blown out to sea, and were never found again. Some non-reinforced buildings had been flattened, but all of the F-86s had been saved."

Above, nose-mounted scoring cameras, such as the one fitted to 52-4009, were favored by many FEAF units over the wing-mounted versions. Nose band, fuselage lightning bolt, wing tanks and canopy name placard were red. Drop tank has a white lightning bolt. (Art Benjamin)

"The biggest problem with the 86s in this environment was moisture. It is humid year-round on Okinawa, with a rainy season of considerable length each year. Facing the East China Sea, salt corrosion also presented a hazard to aircraft. Each time one of our 86s returned from a flight, it would pause on the way to its parking space to receive an injection of fresh water through the intake, applied by an airman with a garden hose."

"As a radar technician, I was never without work, as the humidity and wear and tear on the Hughes fire control systems constantly required repairs and replacements. This system controlled the armament, 24 Mighty Mouse rockets, carried in a retractable belly pod. It was rare for a pilot to land and give a thumbs-up signal when asked about the radar. With so much rain constantly falling on Okinawa, it was a detriment to repairing the radar for us, as we couldn't remove panels from the plane unless the weather was good. So Lt. Thompson, OIC in Armament and Electronics in the 25th, arranged for wooden docks to be built, covered with canvas,

which would enclose the 86 from the nose back to the rear of the fuselage. Three of these were built near the radar shop, and we were then able to work on the planes regardless of weather conditions. The only hassle was in getting someone from engineering to tow the planes into the docks. They had to unhook the tow tug outside the dock, and then a group of us would hand push it in the rest of the way. At least this afforded us some fun, as I enjoyed sitting in the cockpit as the plane was towed a quarter of a mile or so from the flight line area to the dock."

In the fall of 1958, the Communist Chinese military began shelling the Taiwanese-claimed islands of Quemoy and Matsu. In reaction to this threat, USAF units in the area were alerted and deployments to Taiwan began. The 25th FIS sent a detachment to Chia-Yi Air Base on Formosa, comprising four F-86Ds (51-6256, 51-8302, 52-4048 and 52-4060), one T-33 and accompanying personnel, of which Bud Norris was one.

"The Nationalist Chinese base wasn't exactly prepared for us, and we wound up being housed in what formerly were cattle barns, lacking electricity, water, or any other amenities normally expected. Our water was supplied from Lister purifying bags hung outside the barracks, and we walked about a half block to makeshift showers that were tanks of water on the roof of a shack. Nothing like an ice-cold shower at the end of the day. A mess hall was hastily constructed from bamboo."

"Each morning we'd go down to the flight line and pre-flight the planes and then lie under the wings to get some shade while we took a nap and waited for the pilots to show up. I observed operations of the Nationalist Air Force while there, and wondered how they kept their planes in service. Pilots and ground crew would arrive at one of their F-84s, crank it up, and take off with no checks performed. Same procedure ensued when they returned; pilot shut down the bird and climbed out and left without any inspection. These pilots didn't earn much, but got a $500 bonus for every Red fighter they shot down, so they had a big incentive to get a kill. The enlisted men served a mandatory 7 year hitch, and were earning a measly $5 a month in U.S. currency equivalency."

Above, 25th FIS F-86D 52-4048 at Taiwan in 1958 was piloted by Maj R.W. "Doc" Denman. Trim was red outlined by black. (Bud Norris) Bottom, hastily-applied nose art was worn on 25th FIS F-86Ds that deployed to Taiwan in 1958. "No Sweat" was painted on the gear door, "Compliments of Chinese Task Force"was to the right of "X" and "Chia-Yi" was painted over Air Force. This aircraft, 52-4060, was the mount of 1stLt H. P. Knepper. (Bud Norris)

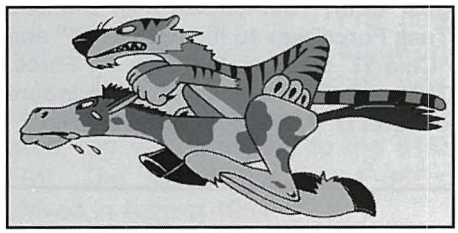
"None of our 86s encountered any Red fighters while I was on Formosa, and eventually we were rotated back to Okinawa for a while. We returned again to another base with more aircraft and better facilities, including a full E-4 radar mock-up in a house trailer, and this time we had better sleeping quarters as well, being housed in what had been Japanese officer's barracks in WW2."

"Before leaving, somebody painted various slogans and sayings, some in Chinese or Japanese that I never interpreted, on the 86s. When they returned to Okinawa, the old man wasn't too happy about them and had them cleaned up and back to USAF regulation markings. We were told, while on Formosa, that if the Reds invaded the island, we were on our own.

Just grab our carbines and a canteen, start walking to the east, and hope to be evacuated eventually. I thought this was rather poor planning, but fortunately such a situation never materialized."

In 1959, the 25th FIS began converting to the F-102A and most of the unit's F-86D aircraft were flown out for overhaul and reassignment to foreign air forces under MAP. The last Sabres left the unit in April 1960.

Above, Maj R. W. "Doc" Denman's aircraft in 1959 at an open house during the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing's transition to Convair F-102A Delta Darts. (via SDAM) Below, early 26th FIS markings had unit's badge on tail instead of checkerboard. (Merle Olmsted via Isham)



26TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Based at Naha AB on Okinawa, the 26th FIS converted from a mix of F-86Fs and F-94 Starfires onto the F-86D in late 1954. The squadron was assigned to the 51st FIW and attached to the 6351st ABW. On 11 November 1954 it was further attached to the 13th AF.

Ken Benner, new out of training, arrived at Naha just prior to the changeover to F-86Ds:

"I went into the Air Force in November of 1953 and went to Naha Air Base on Okinawa in 1954. When I got there we had F-94s and F-86Fs. After about six months we got our new Dogs. We had to zinc chromate and silver oxide paint all the Dogs because of the salt air from the ocean. I was on an 18 month tour. I started as a hydraulics technician - they were short of crew chiefs, so I took on that job which I enjoyed very much. After approximately nine months our squadron went on a mobility move PCS [permanent change of station] to Clark AFB in the Philippines, where we pulled alert on our rotation."

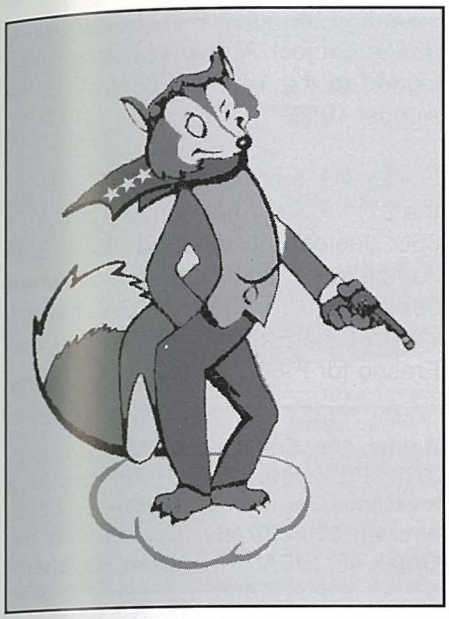
"Now I don't remember if it happened with my pilot, Capt Van Hellen, or happened on alert with another pilot, but someone landed with the windshield de-frost on and cracked the windshield. We could get a windshield to replace it, but could not get the accelerator to cure the cement to seal the windshield. So [the aircraft] sat there for the last two months before I came home; I never knew what happened to it. They were cannibalizing parts off it to keep other planes flying. A bad practice I know, but it was hard to get parts back then."

As Ken mentioned, on 11 July 1955 the unit moved out to Clark AB in the Philippines, and was then permanently assigned to 13th AF control

on 1 October 1957. On 5 June 1958 it was finally assigned under 6200th ABW control.

The squadron was inactivated in April 1959, and all F-86Ds and personnel reassigned to the newly-activated 509th FIS.

Below, late 26th FIS markings with unit badge on forward fuselage. A yellow stripe was above the black checkerboard, and yellow stripes outlined in black were painted on the fuselage and nose. (via Craig Kaston)



31ST FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

The 31st FIS was activated in April 1953 at Larson AFB WA, although it did not receive its first F-86Ds until July of that year. These aircraft were all 51-Fiscal Year models and were mainly replaced with modified F-86D-31s from August to December 1954. These Sabres were only retained for a short time, however, and in May 1955 all were replaced with new 53-Fiscal Year F-86Ds.

On 18 August 1955, the squadron was inactivated and all personnel and assets passed to control of the 322nd FIS. The 31st FIS had been assigned to the 4702nd ADW from April 1953, before reassigning to the 9th AD from 8 October 1954 until disbandment.

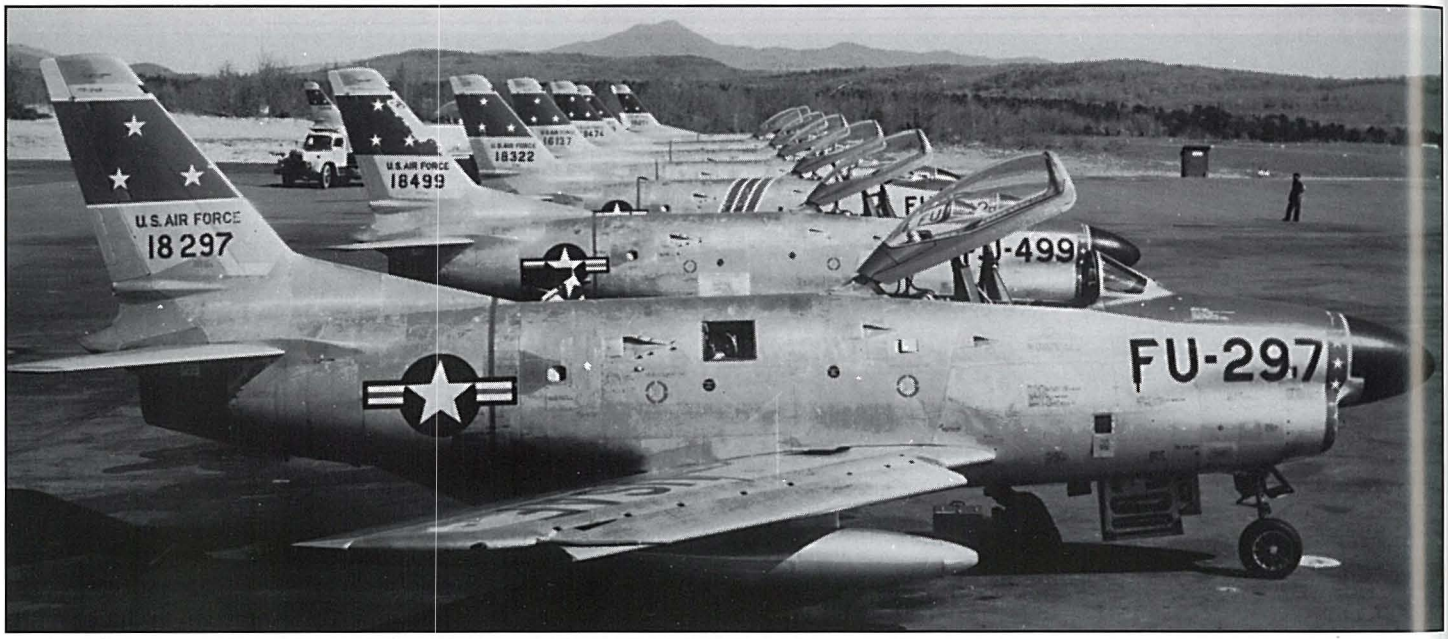
Below, Post Pull-Out F-86D 53-922 fires rockets with cameras mounted under both wings for rocket scoring. Aircraft had unit's yellow and black checkmark on the nose and drop tanks and one yellow fuselage band denoting flight commander. Vertical fin was yellow with black trim and canopy frame was yellow. (R. Wainwright via Isham) Bottom, F-86D-35 51-6202 was the Commanding Officer's aircraft. Just visible is the remains of a fourth yellow fuselage band. (T. Brewer via Isham)

37TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

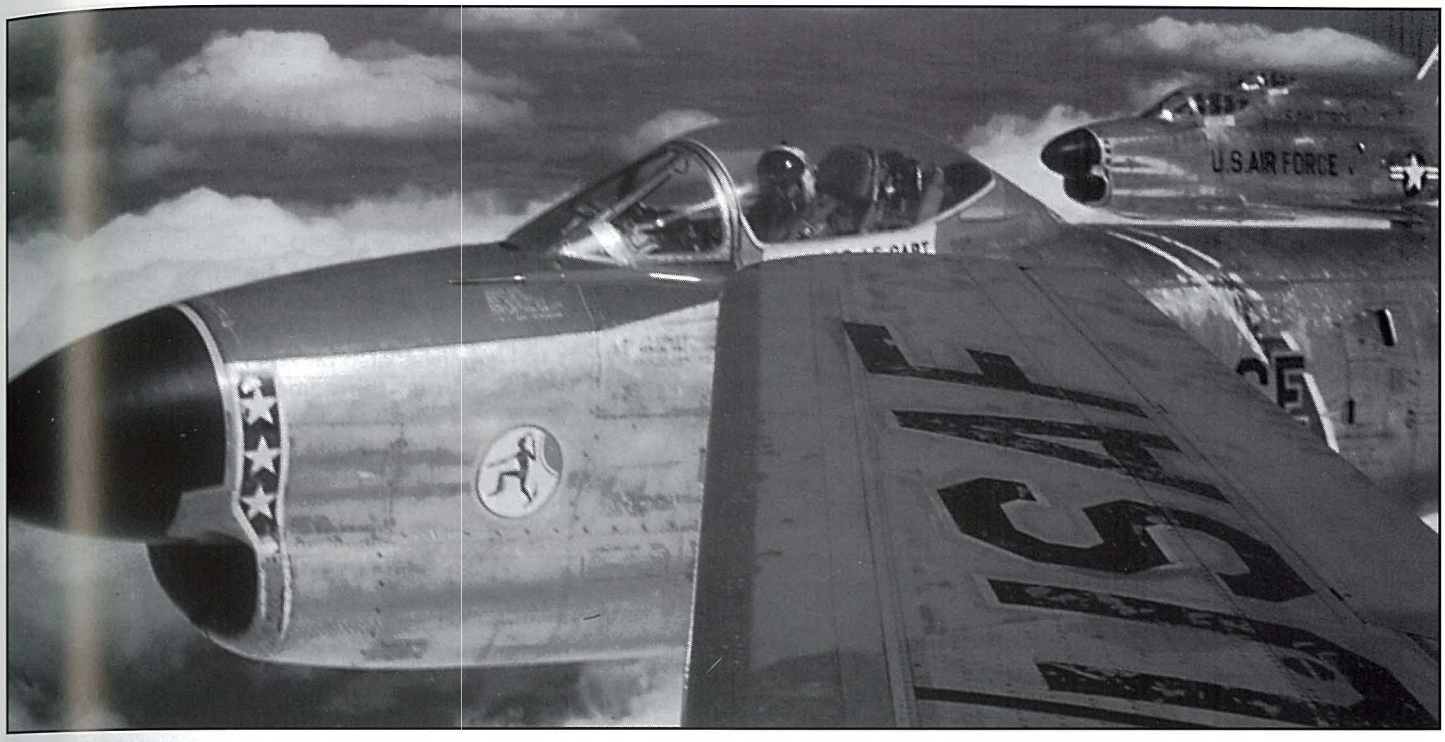
Based at Ethan Allen AFB in Vermont, the 37th FIS converted from the F-51 Mustang to the F-86D during August 1953. The squadron was assigned to the 517th Air Defense Group at this time. The first Sabres to arrive were 51-6249 and –6256, both F-86D-35s. The squadron's initial complement of Sabres consisted of a mix of F-86D-25, -30, -35 and –40 aircraft, and these were retained until the fall of 1954 when post-Pull-Out aircraft (mainly F-86D-31s) began to arrive. The last of the unmodified aircraft departed at the end of November, though post-Pull-Out machines continued to be assigned to the 37th FIS until January 1955. The squadron remained at Ethan Allen during Project Arrow, but was reassigned to the 14th FG control on 18 August 1955.

Unlike many other F-86D units, the 37th FIS did not convert to the F-86L; instead it retained its F-86D complement until August 1957 when conversion to the F-102A began. Most of the F-86Ds were routed into Fresno for F-86L conversion.

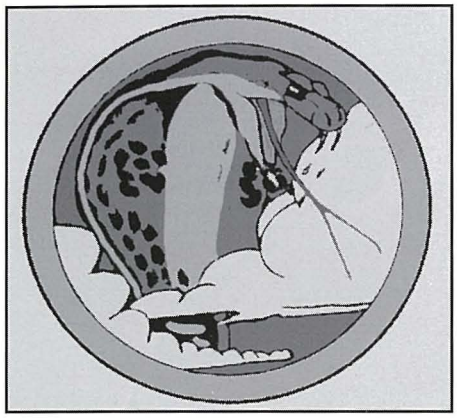
Below, the first Sabres to equip the 37th FIS were these blue-trimmed machines, a mix of F-86D-25/-30/-35 aircraft. 51-8297 later served with the Greek AF. (USAF/W. F. Pratt via Isham)



Below, 37th FIS F-86D-41s while on deployment to Yuma in 1956. Note the arctic red tail and outer wings. (Isham collection)



Above, in-flight formation close-up in 1958. Red outer wing panel of the camera plane is in the foreground. The squadron insignia is seen on the forward fuselage aft of the intake and blue nose stripe with white stars. Anti-glare panel was olive drab. (Bob Goertz via Bill Green, Isham collection) Below, when the 37th FIS gained post Pull-Out F-86D-41s, the color scheme changed somewhat. The wide dark blue fin stripe was moved upwards to make room for the vibrant red arctic markings on the tail. In, addition, the outer wing panels were also painted red. The single white bordered blue fuselage stripe denoted a flight leaders aircraft. (Bob Goertz via Bill Green, Isham collection)

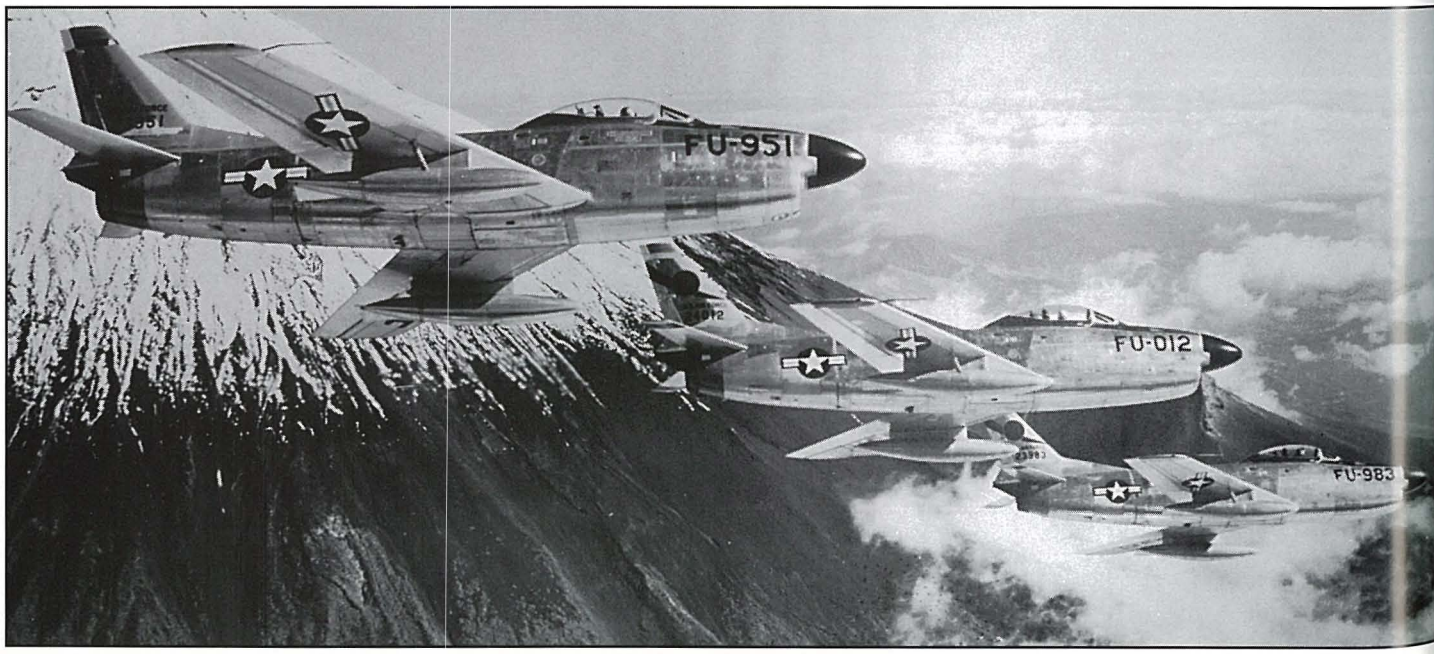


39TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Assigned to the 35th FIG (and further attached to the 51st FIW), the 39th FIS briefly re-equipped from F-86Fs to F-94B Starfires at Johnson AB, Japan, in July 1954, and was immediately moved to Yokota AB. In the midst of this hectic period, Far East Air Force slated the squadron for F-86D conversion in August of the same year. The 39th received mainly F-86D-45 and -50 aircraft. The unit moved to Komaki AB in Japan on 25 August 1955 where it would remain until inactivation. The squadron was briefly assigned to the 41st Air Division on 1 October 1957 before inactivation in December 1957. The remaining F-86Ds had been reassigned to other squadrons within the 51st FIW during September.

Below, F-86D-45 52-4049 in April 1955 appears to be the Commanding Officer's aircraft with its blue star-studded fuselage band. The fin flash was also blue. All 51st FIW F-86Ds carried the same fin flash design upon which was superimposed the relevant unit badge. The 39th FIS fin flash was blue, the 40th FIS was red and the 41st FIS was yellow. (via Norm Taylor)

Below, three 51st FIW F-86Ds fly past Mt. Fuji in Japan. Aircraft were front to back 52-3951, 52-4012, and 52-3983. (USAF via Craig Kaston)



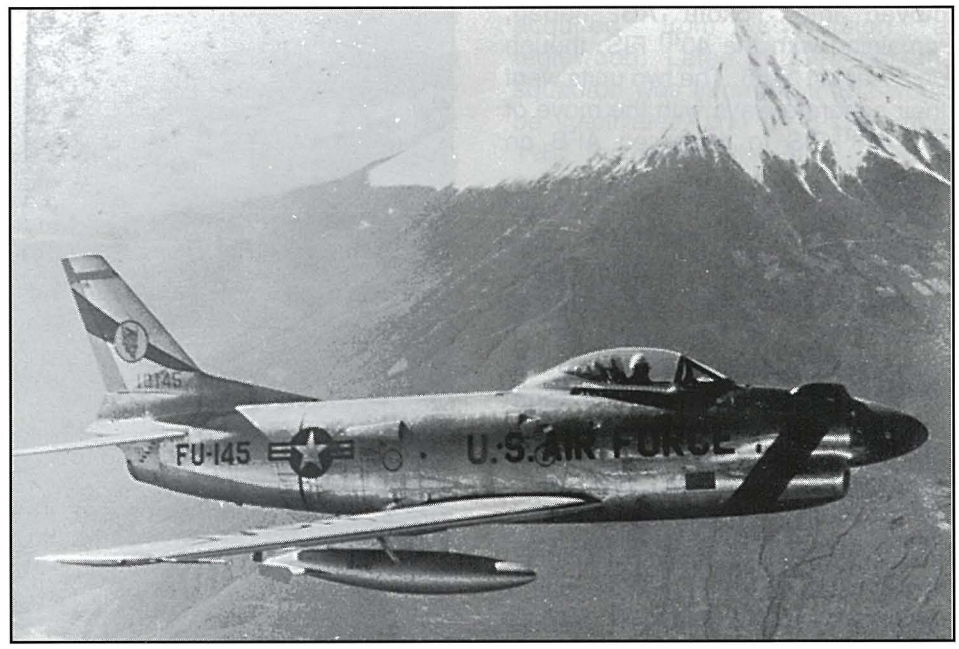
40TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Flying from Johnson AB in Japan, the 40th FIS began converting from F-80Cs to F-86Ds in January 1954 whilst assigned to the 35th FIG. The squadron then moved to Yokota AB on 13 August 1954.

The squadron lost one of its flight commanders in a crash on 23 January 1956, when Capt Ralph Engroff's Sabre (51-6164) crashed just off base. Engroff had been tasked with a pairs IFR training flight and left Yokota at 1210 hrs as number two to Lt Reimers. Witnesses on the ground stated that on rotation Engroff's afterburner flame appeared very bright. At about the same time the pilot radioed that he had an aft overheat light illuminated and that was the last transmission he made; the aircraft never climbed above 300 feet and entered a steep left turn before it crashed less than a mile from the base and exploded.

The 40th FIS was reassigned under the 41st Air Division on 1 October 1957. It then began to re-equip with F-102As during late 1960, and many of the Sabres were passed through overhaul before seeing service with the Japanese Air Self Defense Force (JASDF). The last 40th FIS F-86Ds were assigned directly to JASDF in March 1961. Squadron Motto: Fighting Fortieth.

Above, 40th FIS F-86Ds were trimmed in red outlined in black. "Petite", F-86D-45 52-3966 at Yokota AB on 12 December 1959. The aircraft was transferred to the JASDF as 14-3966. (T. Matsuzaki) Below, 40th FIS F-86D-50 52-10145 with scoring camera attached to the nose flies past Mt. Fuji. This aircraft was passed on to the Japanese in 1961. (Marty Isham)



At right, scoring camera equipped F-86D-45 52-4093 at Haneda Air Port on 16 August 1960. The nose gear lock had failed and the aircraft made an emergency landing. (T. Matsuzaki)

41ST FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Sister squadron to the 40th FIS at Johnson AB, the 41st FIS converted from F-80Cs in early 1954, receiving some of the first F-86Ds in the Far East. On 13 August 1954, the unit moved into Yokota AB, Japan, remaining with the 40th FIS, though on 5 August 1956. The two units went their separate ways with the move of the 41st FIS to Andersen AFB on Guam.

The 41st FIS was then transferred to the 327th AD control on 1 October 1957 before inactivation in March 1960. The majority of the 41st FIS F-86Ds were scrapped on Guam during January 1960 after assignment to the 3960th Composite Group there.

Above, with Mt. Fuji as its backdrop, 52-9989 is seen on 2 August 1955, just eight months after arriving in Japan. It was eventually transferred to the Japanese and is displayed at Yamanashi to this day. Fin flash was yellow outlined by black. (USAF via Larry Davis, Isham collection) Below, 41st FIS F-86D 52-4297 in flight. (via Craig Kaston)

Bottom, the 41st Commanding Officer flew 52-4094, which had three fuselage and one nose yellow stripes outlined by black. (via Larry Davis, Isham col.)

42ND FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

The 42nd FIS was activated under the 501st ADG control at O'Hare International Airport, Illinois, on 24 February 1953 to fly F-86Ds, but did not receive its first Sabre for some time. It finally began conversion to the F-86D with the arrival of 50-728, an F-86D-15 on 6 May, and the vast majority of the squadron's aircraft – F-86D-20, 25, 30 and 35s – arrived during June of 1953.

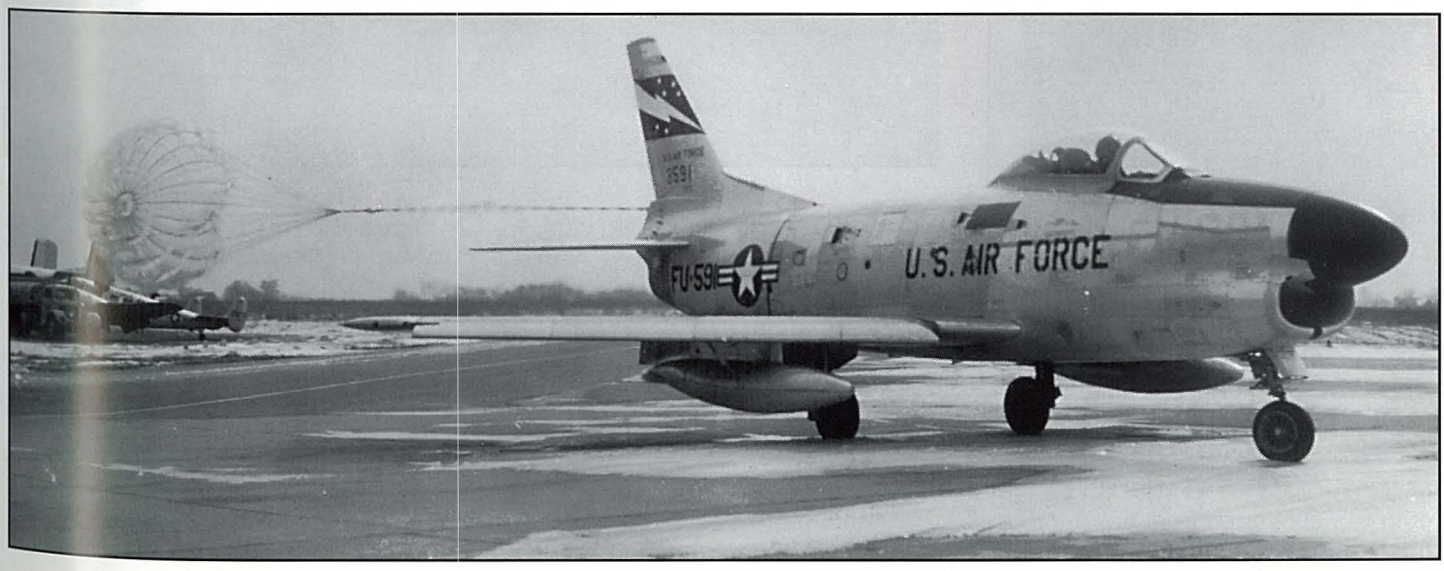
From June 1954, many 42nd FIS Sabre Dogs began to be routed through NAA's Fresno plant for Pull-Out conversion, though they were not swapped for modified aircraft at that time. Instead, in July 1954 the remaining unmodified aircraft were flown out to McClellan AFB for conversion, and squadron pilots transferred down to Inglewood to pick up factory-fresh F-86D-50 and –55 aircraft. The last unmodified F-86D departed O'Hare in March 1955, coinciding with the arrival of the unit's last F-86D-55, 53-741. The unit's first live rocketry detachment took place at Yuma AFB from 7 May to 3 June 1955.

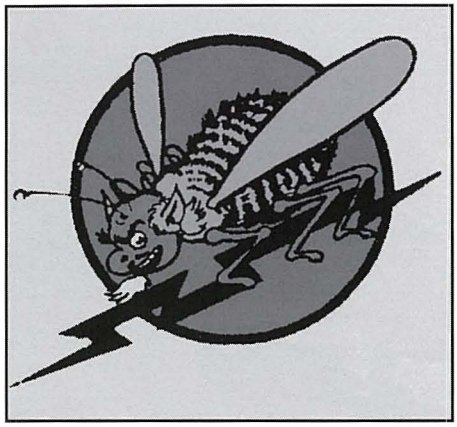
Under Project Arrow, the 42nd FIS transferred "minus personnel and equipment" to the Greater Pittsburgh Airport on 18 August 1955. The unit was reassigned to the 54th FG, taking over a mix of F-86Ds from the 71st FIS. The Sabres at O'Hare were transferred "on paper" to the 63rd FIS.

At Greater Pittsburgh, the 42nd FIS undertook its second Yuma detachment during January 1956, and followed this with a third (to the re-named Vincent AFB) from 2 March 1957. However, the latter was a convoluted affair as the squadron had begun to receive F-86Ls from Fresno during February 1957, and a mix of F-86D and L aircraft undertook the armament camp.

Upon return from Vincent AFB on 30 March, the 42nd FIS again took up the conversion process, though the majority of F-86Ls this time were acquired from conversion at Inglewood. Later in the year the squadron was informed that it would be inactivated, and on 6 December 1957 the first of the 42nd FIS's F-86Ls were transferred to the 146th FIS Pennsylvania ANG. Indeed practically all of the unit's Sabres were transferred to the 146th, and in January 1958, the 42nd FIS was finally inactivated.

Above, 51-6052 was one of the first F-86D-30s assigned to the 42nd FIS. Assigned to the unit on 15 June 1953, it later served with the Danish AF and was lost in a crash on 14 December 1962. Below, late F-86D-50/-55





47TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Based at Niagara Falls Municipal Airport, NY, under 518th ADG control, the 47th FIS converted from F-86F to F-86D in early 1954. The last F-86Fs were reassigned to the 330th FIS in August 1954.

During March 1955, brand-new 53-fiscal year F-86Ds arrived with the squadron and the old pre-Pull-Out aircraft were gradually ferried out for conversion by the end of June 1955. On 23 June, the squadron deployed to Yuma AFB for one month's rocket firing, returning to Niagara Falls on 21 July. Under Project Arrow the 47th FIS transferred to 15th FG control, but unlike many other Sabre units, remained where it was.

A further Yuma detachment took place in July/August 1956, and the 47th FIS then began F-86L conversion during March 1957. The majority of F-86Ls were ferried in from Inglewood, and by the end of July 1957 the re-equipping process was complete. Just two months later the 47th FIS deployed again to Vincent AFB for rocket firing, returning to Niagara on 26 October.

The squadron re-equipped with F-102As early in 1958, and the F-86Ls were lost to the 444th FIS in March 1958. A second batch went to the 133rd FIS New Hampshire ANG in early April. The last of the the 47th FIS F-86Ls were reassigned to the 1st FIW at Selfridge on 18 April 1958.

Above, F-86L-60 of the 47th FIS was assigned to the unit on 8 February 1957. The nose markings denote the squadron, and comprise a dark blue "spade", outlined in yellow, over which is superimposed a yellow "4" with two dice, reading "4" and "3", to denote the figure seven. Lightning bolt on the tail was yellow outlined in black. 891 was lost in a crash while assigned to the New Hampshire ANG in June 1958. (K. Buchanan via Isham)

49TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Based at Dow AFB, Maine, and assigned to the 4711th ADW, the 49th FIS converted from the F-86F to the F-86D beginning in February 1954, though the last F-86D-50s for the unit were not assigned until May 1955. Most of the F-86Fs were then passed to the 3595th CCTW at Nellis AFB. On 5 November 1955, the 49th FIS moved its F-86Ds into Hanscom AFB in Massachussetts, reassigning concurrently to 4707th ADW control.

Although the 49th FIS undertook a Yuma detachment during February 1956, the squadron was heavily involved with the Lincoln Laboratory's

Above, 52-10108 sits on the Yuma ramp in February 1956. This view shows the green nose stripe with white stars applied to most of the squadron's F-86Ds. The scheme was similar to that worn 37th FIS aircraft. (Bob Lilley via Green, Isham col.)

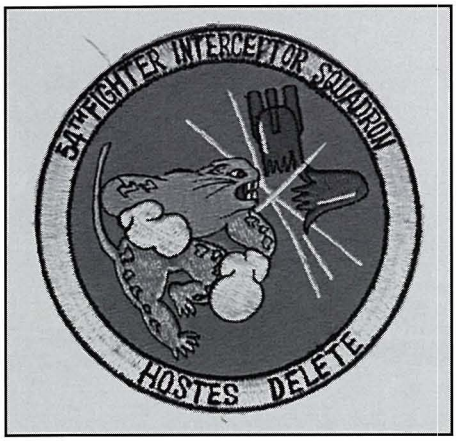
Above, in February 1956, the 49th FIS deployed to Yuma AFB for live rocket firing. These F-86D-50s show the squadron's green tail band with three white stars. 52-4284 at left also wears a green flight commander's fuselage band. (Bob Lilley via Isham) Below, when F-86Ls began to arrive, the 49th FIS changed its livery. The green was retained on the nose and tail with a yellow lightning bolt added to the tail. The wing tank markings and flight commander stripe were also green. The squadron insignia is located aft of the cockpit and the "B" flight insignia is found on the nose gear door. (Jim Burridge, 9-57)

Cambridge Research Center (CRC). The main task for the 49th FIS at this time was in testing CRC's Semi-Automatic Ground Environment (SAGE) system which was being developed for Air Defense Command procurement.

As a result, many 49th FIS F-86D aircraft flew with SAGE components that represented the first phase of F-86L development. It was thus sensible that the 49th FIS would become the first USAF unit to receive converted F-86L aircraft, although it seems that the first few, which arrived in early August 1956, had only received airframe modifications. Thus, when CRC installed the SAGE avionics at Hanscom these aircraft were only finally redesignated as F-86Ls in October 1956. In the meantime, during June 1956, the 49th FIS was reassigned to the 32nd Air Division's control.

Although the burden of SAGE testing had been completed by early 1957, a number of 49th FIS F-86Ls were bailed temporarily to CRC during the year; a number of other aircraft were permanently transferred out to ANG squadrons from April 1958. On 1 August, the 49th FIS was placed under the command of the Boston Air Defense Sector.

Finally, on 1 July 1959, the 49th FIS tag was transferred "less personnel and equipment" to an F-89 Scorpion unit at Griffiss AFB. Concurrently, the F-86Ls at Hanscom took over the 465th FIS tag.



54TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

The 54th FIS at Rapid City AFB in South Dakota converted from F-84G Thunderjets to F-86Ds starting in late January 1954. The initial complement was comprised of brand-new F-86D-40 aircraft and conversion was completed with the arrival of the last aircraft on 8 February.

The first squadron commander was LtCol (later BGen) William H. Fairbrother. He would later command the 324th FIS at Sidi Slimane in Morocco, another F-86D unit. 54th FIS markings comprised a red, white and blue harpoon design on the forward fuselage, complemented by an angled red, white and blue fuselage band as well as an angled chevron on the vertical fin, also in the same colors. Most of the unit's aircraft were named after cities in the South Dakota area.

The squadron was plagued with accidents almost from the first days of operation. On 23 March 1954, 2ndLt Wesley Cook ejected from 52-3622 after running short of fuel on a GCI practice mission. The aircraft crashed in deep snow on the Warren Martin ranch, 5 miles west of Meade, SD. Cook was badly injured but his machine was a write-off.

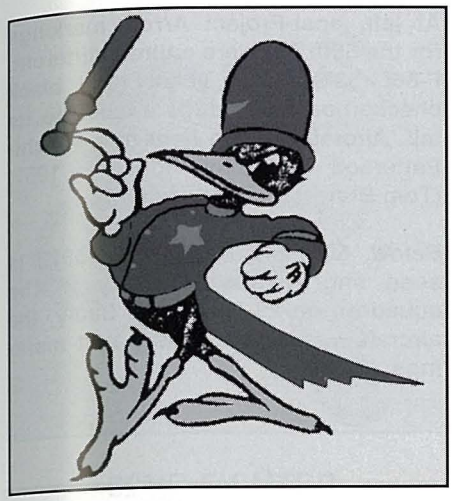
2ndLt Arnold Weber escaped unhurt from 52-3628 on 12 June 1954 during a GCI scramble mission. Ten minutes after departure from Ellsworth, Weber's wingman advised that fire and vapor were trailing from '628. Weber was unable to retard his throttle and ejected at 35,000 feet, 40 miles southeast of Bismarck; his aircraft crashed near Burleygh, 8 miles east-northeast of Bismarck. Examination of the wreckage revealed a number of turbine blades missing from the engine, caused in turn by compressor failure forward of the eighth stage.

Above, unmarked F-86D-30 51-5979 assigned to the 54th FIS at Logan Airport, Boston, MA, on 15 April 1954. (P. Paulson via Norm Taylor) Below, the F-86Ds of the 54th FIS were named after local towns, in this case "City of Sturgis So. Dak.". 51-8505 was the last F-86D-35 built. It was converted to F-86D-36 and joined the squadron in January 1955. (D. Curtis collection)

The unit suffered another accident on 17 February 1955, the aircraft involved being 51-8434, an F-86D-36 that had only been with the unit for two weeks. Capt David Baker had been briefed for a GCI proficiency flight aboard '434, and thirteen minutes into the sortie had radioed that he had experienced severe vibration along with cabin depressurisation. Baker was given a vector straight back to Ellsworth, which was 70 miles distant at this time. He almost immediately declared an emergency, having noticed that his fire warning light was on. Unable to rectify the situation, Baker ejected, but his parachute failed to open; his body was found close to the wreckage of his aircraft, which had crashed in open land during a blizzard, 48 miles northeast of Ellsworth.

As mentioned, the 54th FIS received post-Pull-Out F-86D-36s from early January 1955, exchanging aircraft to and from the conversion lines. The unit suffered another accident during this phase, 52-3656 being lost on landing at McClellan AFB on 27 March 1955. The pilot on this occasion was LtCol Walter Olson, a ferry pilot assigned to the NAA modification center at Fresno; he was killed in the crash.

The 54th FIS exchanged its Sabres for F-89J Scorpions during late 1957. Throughout its tenure with F-86Ds the unit was assigned to the 29th AD.



56TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Coming under 575th Air Defense Group and based at Selfridge AFB in Michigan, the 56th FIS converted from F-86Fs during August of 1953. The squadron received its first F-86D-35 aircraft on 15 August, and by the end of September had a full complement of dash-20, 30, 35 and 40 aircraft. The last F-86Fs departed in December 1953, bound for the 49th FIS.

The changeover to Pull-Out-modified aircraft began in late July 1954, and most of the modified aircraft – the majority being F-86D-36s – came from McClellan AFB. Full conversion was achieved in February 1955, and unusually one of these post-Pull-Out machines (51-6223) had previously flown with the 56th FIS. It had been one of the first aircraft rotated into McClellan during October 1954 and after conversion was returned to the unit in February 1955. It was far more usual for a squadron to receive aircraft that were completely new to the unit.

However, during May 1955, brand-new F-86D-60s were assigned to the 56th FIS, and this allowed most of the F-86D-36 aircraft to be reassigned overseas. Typically, despite this period of high aircraft turnaround, Project Arrow reared its head, and on 18 August 1955, the 56th FIS moved "less personnel and equipment" to Wright-Patterson AFB and 4706th ADW control. There it took over the 97th FIS F-86D-55 and 60s. The aircraft at Selfridge were concurrently transferred to the 94th FIS control. On 1 March 1956, control of the 56th FIS was passed to the 58th Air Division.

At top, 56 FIS F-86Ds initially had a yellow lightning bolt shooting through a red star as tail markings. (Brian Baker via P. Stevens/M. Isham) Below, the arrival of new F-86D-60s for the 56th FIS in early 1955 prompted a change in tail markings. The yellow lightning bolt was retained, but the 575th ADGp insignia was added instead of the star seen above. (Volker/Esposito via Isham)

Now settled at Wright-Patterson, the 56th FIS did not undertake its first rocket firing deployments until January 1957, when it flew out to Vincent AFB. Immediately upon return in early February a number of squadron aircraft were deployed to O'Hare International Airport to stand temporary alert for one of the 56th FG's squadrons.

From March 1957, 56th FIS crews began ferrying Sabres out to NAA's Inglewood plant, returning to Wright-Patterson with newly-converted F-86Ls. This conversion process was completed in mid-August. Finally in March 1958, the 56th FIS received its first F-104A Starfighters and began to phase-out the F-86L. The squadron was reassiged to the 30th AD control on 1 September. The first Sabres to depart left immediately for the 49th FIS at Hanscom. In October 1958, further Sabres were transferred to McClellan AFB. Finally, in January 1959, the 56th FIS phased-out its last few F-86L aircraft, all of which went to the Iowa ANG at Des Moines.

At left, post-Project Arrow markings for the 56th FIS were entirely different. F-86L 53-931 had yellow and black checkerboard markings applied to its tail. Aircraft is seen here at a Wright-Patterson AFB open house in 1957. (Tom Brewer via Marty Isham)

Below, 60th FIS F-86D-30 51-5979 is seen shortly after delivery to the squadron on 29 May 1953. Sadly, the aircraft was devoid of any unit markings. (Picciani)

60TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Based at Westover AFB in Massachussetts, and assigned to the 4707th Defense Wing, the 60th FIS began to receive new F-86D-20, 25, 30 and 35 aircraft in late May 1953. The squadron's previous mounts, a mix of early and late-model F-86Es, were ferried out starting in June, but it was not until February 1954 that the last day fighter left the unit.

The 60th FIS bypassed the transition onto post-Pull-Out F-86Ds, and instead received brand-new F-86D-55s from December 1954. The last of these new aircraft was assigned in March 1955 and by this point all the early-model F-86Ds had been routed through Pull-Out conversion lines. Whilst at Westover, the 60th came up with a newly-designed squadron badge, featuring a skeletal hand drawing an ace of spades from a top hat; USAF brass rejected the design, but squadron personnel preferred – and wore – the unofficial patch in preference to the fighting crow design.

Under Project Arrow, the 60th FIS designation was transferred to an F-94C squadron at Otis AFB and all 60th FIS Sabres were transferred "on paper" to the 337th FIS at Westover on 18 August 1955. The unofficial patch also faded into obscurity.

62ND FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

The 62nd FIS, flying the F-86F out of O'Hare International Airport, IL, re-equipped with F-86Ds in May 1953, receiving brand-new block F-86D-20 to 40 aircraft. The last F-86Fs departed in June, but full re-equipment with the F-86D was not achieved until October of that year. At the time, the 62nd FIS was under control of the 501st Air Defense Wing and became the fourth USAF F-86D unit to equip.

The squadron had a torrid time converting to the F-86D, losing five aircraft to accidents in 1953 alone. Indeed the first machine – 51-5987 – was lost on 19 May 1953 only one week after its arrival. The aircraft caught fire in flight and crashed 3 miles north-west of Crystal Lake, Illinois.

Pull-Out conversion began in earnest during May 1954 and proved a drawn-out process; the last modified aircraft were finally received in February 1955. However, almost immediately the squadron began to receive second-hand F-86D-45 aircraft and these formed the mainstay of the unit. Under Project Arrow, the 62nd FIS was returned to 56th FG control, remaining at O'Hare after its 18 August 1955 reassignment. A Yuma rocket detachment took place from 24 March to 21 April 1956.

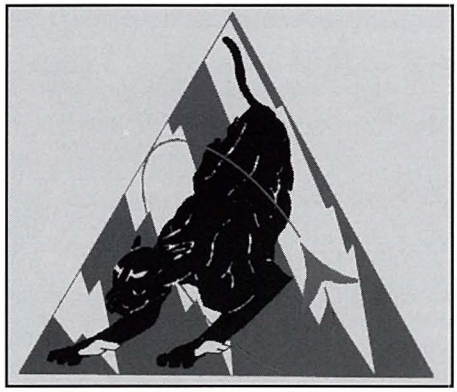
Color scheme during this period consisted of a broad blue band on either side of the vertical tail onto which was superimposed a yellow lightning flash. The squadron's number was represented by six yellow stars above the lightning flash and two below – '62'. LtCol Lloyd Stinson was the 62nd FIS commanding officer, and his aircraft, 52-4177, bore three yellow fuselage bands bordered in black. This aircraft was unusual in wearing the squadron badge on both fuselage flanks, along with yellow scalloped tips to the drop tanks.

Many of the unit's aircraft also carried a blue lightning flash on the canopy rail, onto which the pilot's name (right hand side) and crew chief (left hand side) were painted. LtCol Stinson's crew chief was MSgt Pulaskis. Another variation in color scheme was the application of an angled yellow banner just aft of the engine intake. Though some aircraft appear to have carried a personalized name on this banner, most simply carried the script, "62ND FTR. INTCP. SQ.", in this space.

From November 1956 through April 1957, the 62nd FIS converted to the F-86L, receiving mainly dash-60 aircraft from all three conversion lines. The squadron again visited Vincent AFB in September 1957 for rocket firing and returned once more for one month during July and August 1958.

The 62nd FIS was slated to re-equip with F-101B Voodoos in August 1959, and as a result the squadron's Sabres were handed over to the 182nd FIS, Texas ANG, during July of that year. On 1 August, the squadron moved to K.I.Sawyer AFB in Michigan where it received its first Voodoo.

Above, this mix of 62nd FIS aircraft illustrate the change-over period in early 1955 when the final pre-Pull-Out aircraft were replaced with drag-chuted aircraft. The aircraft in front and rear are new F-86D-45s while 52-3876 in the center is a non-drag-chuted F-86D-40. (Kerans via Marty Isham) Bottom, color scheme worn by 62nd FIS F-86Ls reflected the general trend toward high visibility markings in the late 1950s with da-glo nose, tail and outer wing markings. 53-993 wears a red tail band, over which is painted a yellow lightning bolt surrounded by small white stars. Small insignia is believed to be that of the 56th FG. (Dave Menard via Marty Isham)



63RD FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

The 63rd FIS at Oscoda AFB, MI, had a scrappy association with the F-86D. Initially converting from F-86Fs to F-86D-30 and –35 aircraft during May 1953, these were then lost in August 1954 when the squadron converted to the F-89D Scorpion. During the brief period with the F-86D, the 63rd FIS was assigned to the 527th Air Defense Group control.

However, under Project Arrow, the 42nd FIS at O'Hare International Airport was redesignated the 63rd FIS, and the "new" unit began flying the outgoing unit's F-86D-45 and -55 aircraft on 18 August 1955. The old 42nd FIS color scheme was retained, except that the group of "four and two" stars either side of the tail-fin lightning flash was modified to a "six and three" configuration.

The squadron was presented with an ADC Flight Safety award on 3 June 1956 for accomplishing an accident-free year. The intervening period covered the previous squadron's F-89 operations, although strangely overlooked was the loss of 53-779 on 21 August 1955.

Back in the 56th Fighter Group fold, the 63rd FIS undertook a Yuma rocketry detachment from 24 August to 20 September 1956.

Frederick Hitchcock was crew chief on one of the unit's Sabres – 53-642, named "Jeanne Dee's Lil Sis" – and recalls one major headache:

"In the summer of 1957 '642 experienced an electrical fire that severely burned all the wiring. I was assigned along with '642 to the CAMRON hangar while it was repaired. It was a long stay as the plane was cannibalized for spare parts. About the time one thing would get repaired, the mechanics would grab another part of '642 for another plane."

"When the crew had '642 together again, a test flight was set up. Because I had spent so much time with the plane, the day of the test flight I went to the end of the runway just in case it needed some help getting airborne. It made it, and everything worked!"

During March 1957 the squadron received its first F-86L, and was fully equipped by the end of July. All F-86Ds were in turn rotated through the Inglewood F-86L conversion line.

The 63rd FIS was deactivated on 8 January 1958 and most of its aircraft passed to the 108th FIS Illinois ANG.

Below, four 63rd FIS F-86Ds during 1954 in echelon formation. Attractive comet design was used on the tail at this time. (National Archives)

68TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Initially assigned to Japan Air Self Defense Force control, the 68th FIS was unique in being the only overseas USAF unit to operate F-86Ds without drag 'chutes. During November 1953, fifty-six F-86D-35s were assigned to Far East Air Force (FEAF) and delivered straight to McClellan to be prepared for overseas movement. All of these aircraft were then flown to San Francisco for transport to Japan as deck cargo, where they arrived in late December. Unpacked and test flown by the 6408th Air Depot Group at Kisarazu, twenty-eight of these F-86Ds were then assigned to the 68th FIS at Itazuke AB. The remaining twenty-eight Sabres at Kisarazu remained in store and were eventually returned to the United States without being assigned to an active unit in FEAF.

Above, 68th FIS at Itazuke painted with red tail bands and lightning flashes on its Sabres. The unit had initially flown non-drag-chuted F-86Ds, but received fully-equipped F-86D-45s starting in October 1954. (via Craig Kaston) Bottom, the 68th dropped the fuselage lightning bolt and added the unit badge to the tail. 52-4036 was named "The Diddy Mop" and flew with the 68th from April 1957 through October 1959. (Lionel Paul collection)

The 68th FIS received the Far East Air Force's first F-86Ds from mid-February 1954, and these Sabres began to replace the unit's old F-94B Starfires. Conversion was completed in May of 1954. The 68th FIS flew these early-model Sabres until later in the year when drag 'chute-equipped aircraft began to arrive with the FEAF. During the time that the 68th FIS flew the 'non-drag 'chute Sabres, the unit lost only one aircraft – 51-8494, which crashed on 11 September. This unusual chapter was brought to a close from 13 October when the first F-86D-35s flew out to Kisarazu for cocooning and shipment Stateside again. The final aircraft, 51-8484, was assigned out on 12 December.

The unit was reassigned to 5th AF control on 1 September and received its first drag-chuted aircraft in November. The squadron was further reassigned under the 43rd Air Division on 1 March 1955. The 68th FIS then flew mainly F-86D-45 aircraft for the remaining period of Sabre operations. Remaining at Itazuke, the 68th FIS was transferred to 41st Air Division command on 1 October 1957 and two years later, the first F-102As arrived for the unit.

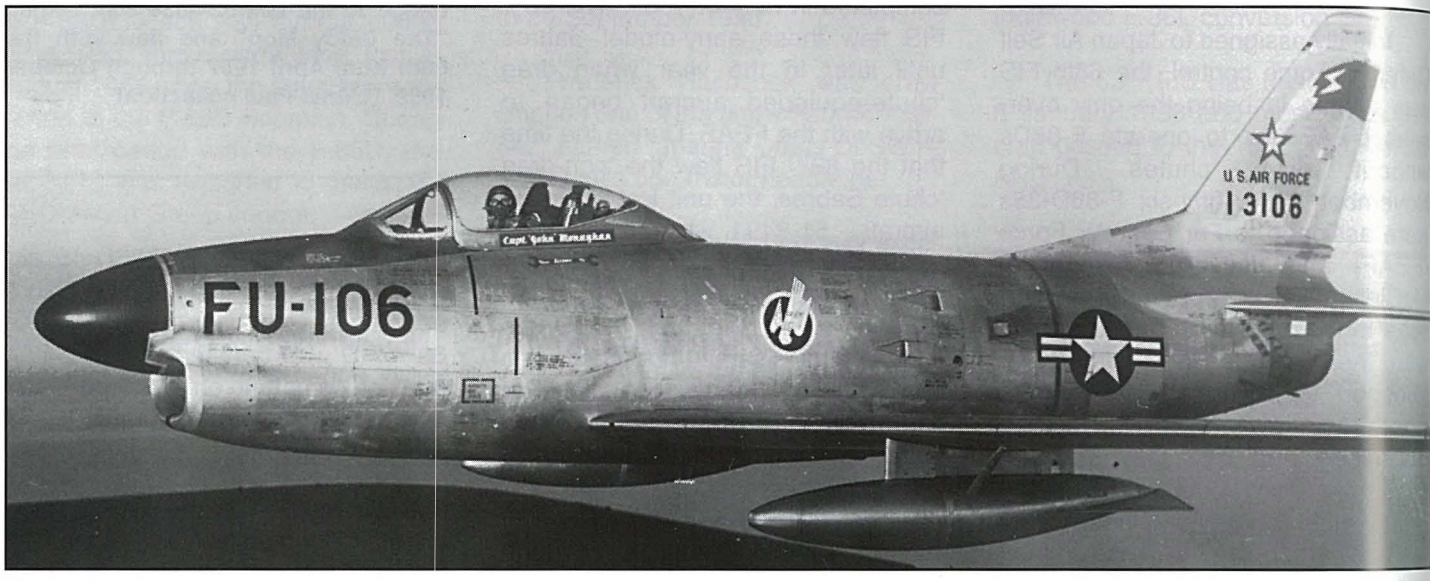
Conversion to the F-102A was slow and some aircraft were lost to other units – mainly the 40th FIS – from October 1959. It was not until April 1960 that the last Sabres departed.

71ST FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Historically tied to the 1st Fighter Group, the 71st FIS went its own way during the Korean War, and moved its F-86As to Greater Pittsburgh Airport, PA, and ultimately to the 500th ADG control. The squadron began converting from the F-86A to F-86Ds during May 1953. Initial deliveries were F-86D-30s, but other 51-fiscal year block aircraft were assigned before the end of July.

Post-Pull-Out aircraft were received from June 1954, as well as a number of F-86D-45 Sabres, and when Project Arrow took effect on 18 August 1955 all were transferred to 42nd FIS control. At the same time, the 71st FIS tag transferred back to 1st FG control at Selfridge AFB, taking over 13th FIS F-86D-55 and -60 aircraft there.

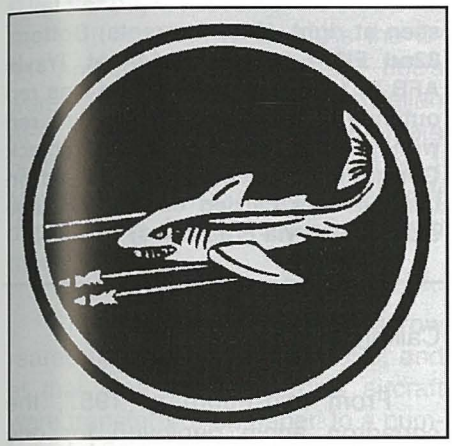
Whilst at Selfridge, the 71st undertook a rocket firing deployment to Yuma AFB 1 to 25 February 1956. However, before the next deployment the squadron converted onto F-86Ls, receiving its first modified aircraft in February 1957. Now fully-equipped with these aircraft, the 71st FIS deployed again to Vincent AFB from 3 August to 8 September 1957. The 71st FIS received its first F-102As in 1958 and phased the F-86L out by the end of the year.



Above, early 71st FIS markings are seen on 51-3106, personal mount of Capt John Monaghan. Comet design on the tail was red and white. (Bob Dorr collection via Isham) Below, on 18 August 1955, the 71st FIS was transferred "on paper" to Selfridge AFB and 1st FG control. It concurrently took over F-86D-60s such as 53-902, from the 13th FIS. Lightning flash and fuselage bands are thought to be red. (Dave Menard collection via Isham)

Above, 71st FIS F-86Ls had a red lightning bolt on the tail with an ADC insignia. 53-789 was the Commanding Officer's aircraft and wears three red fuselage stripes outlined in white. The aircraft was donated to the Kalamazoo American Legion in 1960. (Marty Isham collection)

Bottom, 75th FIS F-86D-35 51-6160 on 4 August 1953 in Commanding Officer's markings. Tail and fuselage stripes were red, while the squadron insignia was mostly black. Note the small eye just forward of the buzz number. (Bill Bradbury via Bob Dorr)

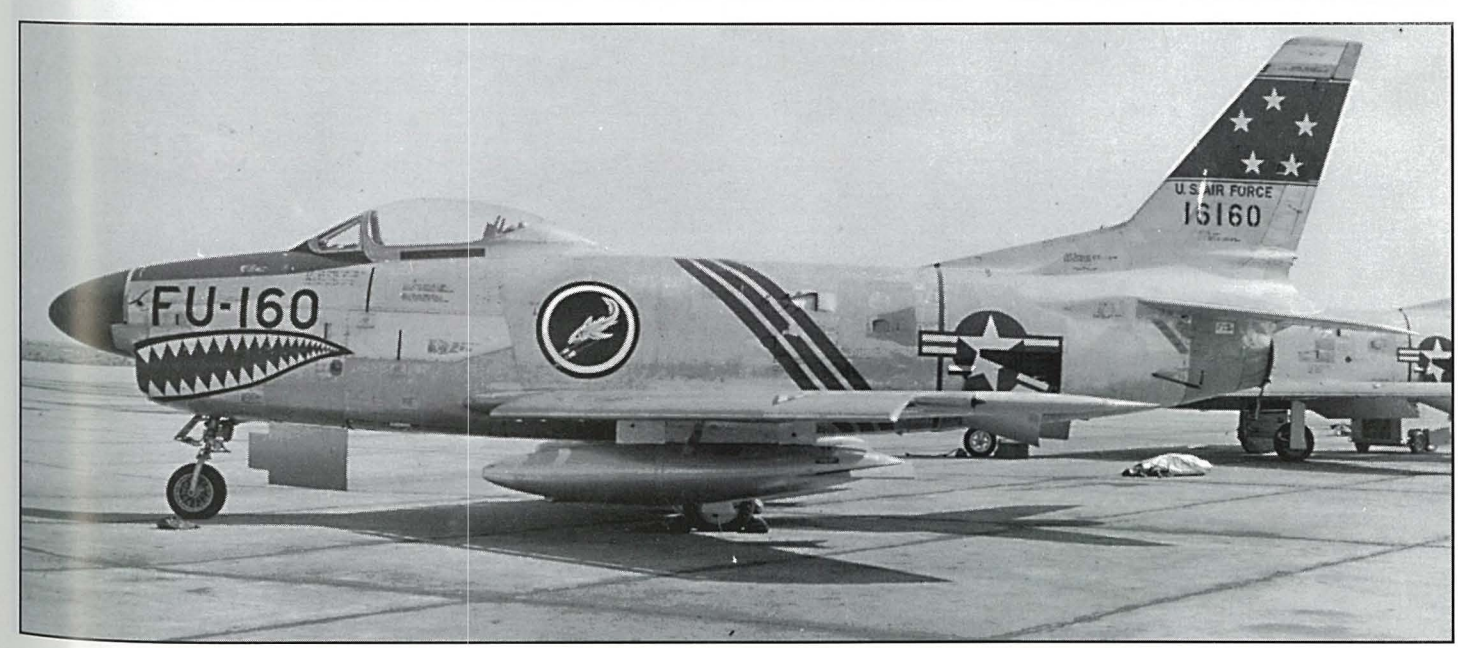


75TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

The 75th FIS converted from F-86As to the F-86D during August 1953 at Suffolk County AFB. Coming under the 519th Air Defense Group control, the squadron received its first aircraft on 4 August, and by October the F-86As had all been reassigned, mainly to the 330th FIS.

During August 1954, all of the squadron's F-86D-30 aircraft were ferried out to McClellan AFB for Pull-Out modification, but it was not until the following month that modified aircraft began arriving with the 75th FIS. These comprised eighteen F-86D-26s and eight F-86D-31s; all were delivered before the end of November. Less than six months later, in early April 1955, the 75th FIS again swapped its aircraft – this time for factory-fresh F-86D-60s. It was with these aircraft that the squadron deployed to Yuma for weapons firing on 24 May 1955. The 75th FIS returned to Suffolk County one month later.

Under Project Arrow, on 18 August 1955 the 75th FIS tag was transferred to an F-89 squadron at Presque Isle AFB, regaining its 23rd FG "Flying Tiger" heritage. At the same time the Sabres at Suffolk County were transferred "on paper" to the 2nd FIS.



82ND FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Under Project Arrow, the 82nd FIS (previously an F-89D Scorpion unit) took over the 413th FIS F-86Ds at Travis AFB on 18 August 1955. This enabled the unit to transfer back to the 78th FG control, flying mainly F-86D-55s. In late November, the 82nd FIS deployed to Yuma for one month's live rocket firing.

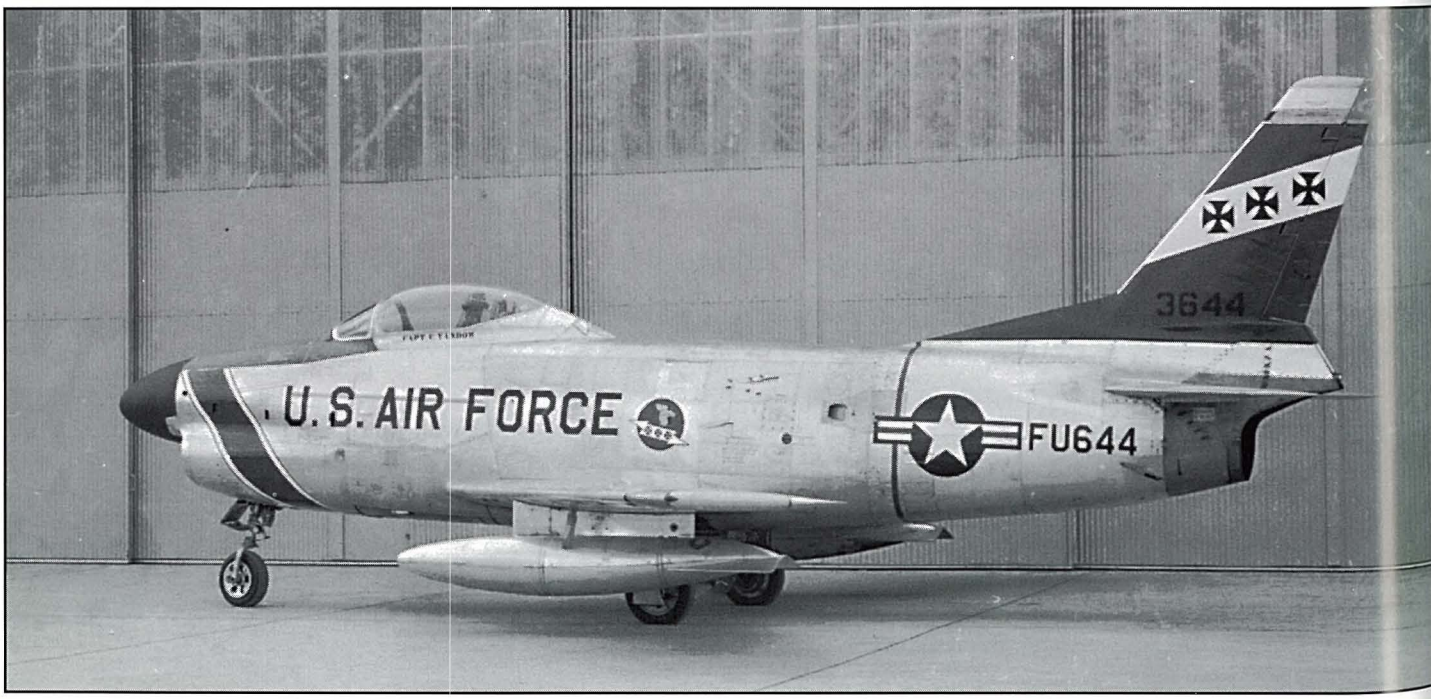
In March 1956 a number of F-86Ds were gained from the 327th FIS, but were retained for only a few months before being assigned to F-86L conversion.

Inevitably, the squadron lost a number of aircraft, beginning with 53-774 on 12 April 1956 and 53-647 on 7 July. Further losses followed. At 1452 hrs on 13 July 1956 three 82nd FIS Sabres departed Travis AFB to practice tactical and close-formation flying. Climbing to 33,000 feet the flight went through a series of maneuvers while descending to 20,000 feet. Number 3 in the formation then declared 1,000 pounds of fuel left and was released for return to Travis.

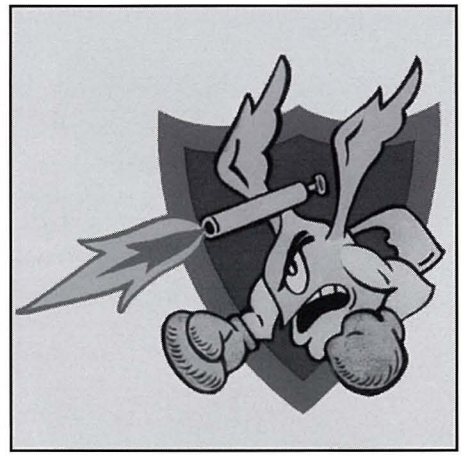
The element leader, 1stLt Al Crews, flying in 53-746 then instructed his wingman 1stLt Albert Mitchell (in 53-616) to close up. At this point Crews commenced a series of lazy eights followed by a diving turn to the left with a view to rolling out on a heading for Travis. Unfortunately, 1stLt Mitchell then overshot his leader and the aircraft collided. Both pilots immediately attempted recovery, but control had been lost; they ejected and landed in a wheat field 1/4 of a mile apart. Both received superficial bruising but were otherwise unaffected by their ordeal. Their aircraft crashed 8 miles east of Dixon, California.

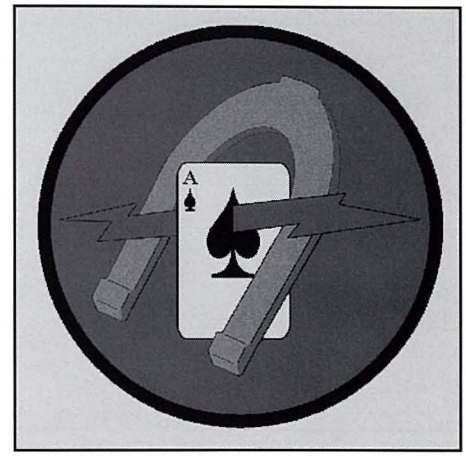
Above, 82nd FIS visited Yuma AFB with F-86Ds only once, in November 1955. Aircraft in the center was F-86D-55 53-613 and a 330th FIS aircraft tail is seen at right. (Otto Loorents) Bottom, 82nd FIS F-86D-55 53-644 at Travis AFB in 1956. The nose stripe was red outlined in white and the tail was red with a white stripe and three black Germanic crosses. The squadron insignia was carried on the fuselage side. (USAF via Fred Roos)

From mid-February 1957, the squadron again deployed for one month's rocket firing, this time to the re-named Vincent AFB. Soon after returning from Vincent AFB, the 82nd FIS began to dispose of its remaining F-86D aircraft into F-86L conversion. However, instead of converting onto the F-86L, the 82nd FIS received F-102A Delta Daggers.



83RD FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON





Above, the 83rd FIS took over F-86D-60 Sabres from the 325th FIS and retained some of the latter's trim touches, notably the colored flash under the nose area. The nose flash was blue outlined in white and the tail band was white outlined bordered by blue. 53-820 was photographed at NAS Moffett Field, CA, on 19 May 1956. (William T. Larkins via Swisher) Below, 83rd FIS F-86L 53-950 at NAS Oakland with its rocket tray lowered on 15 September 1957. (Larry Smalley via Swisher)

Assigned to the 529th Air Defense Group, the 83rd FIS converted from F-89B Scorpions to F-86Ds starting in September 1953. The squadron's base during this period was Paine AFB in Washington State, and its initial compliment of Sabres comprised mainly 51-fiscal year models.

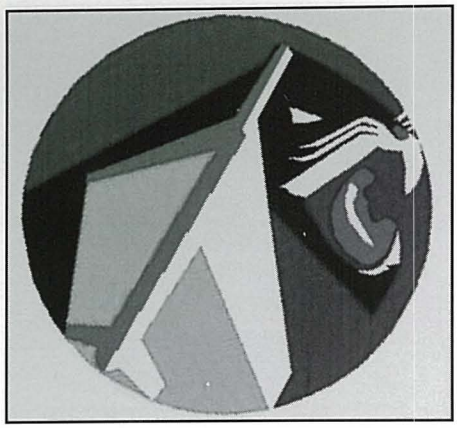
In December 1954, the squadron began to receive brand-new F-86D-55s, thereby bypassing the need for Pull-Out modified aircraft. As the D-55s arrived, the early-model F-86Ds were passed to Fresno and McClellan AFB. The changeover was complete by the end of March 1955, and on 1 May a number of squadron aircraft deployed to McChord AFB for two months.

The inevitable Project Arrow reared its head in August 1955, and at that time the squadron's aircraft were transferred "on paper' to a number of ADC squadrons, including the 321st FIS. At the same time, the 83rd FIS took over the Sabres of the 325th FIS at Hamilton AFB, California, and the unit was reassigned to the 78th FG control.

At Hamilton, the 83rd FIS's line-up consisted of two F-86D-36 'Pull-Out' aircraft and twenty-seven F-86D-60s. However, the former were quickly reassigned to McClellan AFB during September and two further F-86D-60s from the 327th FIS were assigned in March 1956 in their stead.

In April 1957, the first NAA-modified F-86Ls arrived for the 83rd FIS and the F-86Ds were ferried-out individually to Inglewood for their turn in the conversion line. The last F-86Ls were assigned to the squadron in August 1957.

However, in December 1957, the 83rd FIS received its first F-104A, and the task of conversion began again. Most of the squadron's Sabres were transferred to 187th FIS Wyoming and the 194th FIS California Air National Guard units. The 83rd FIS in turn became the first ADC Starfighter squadron.



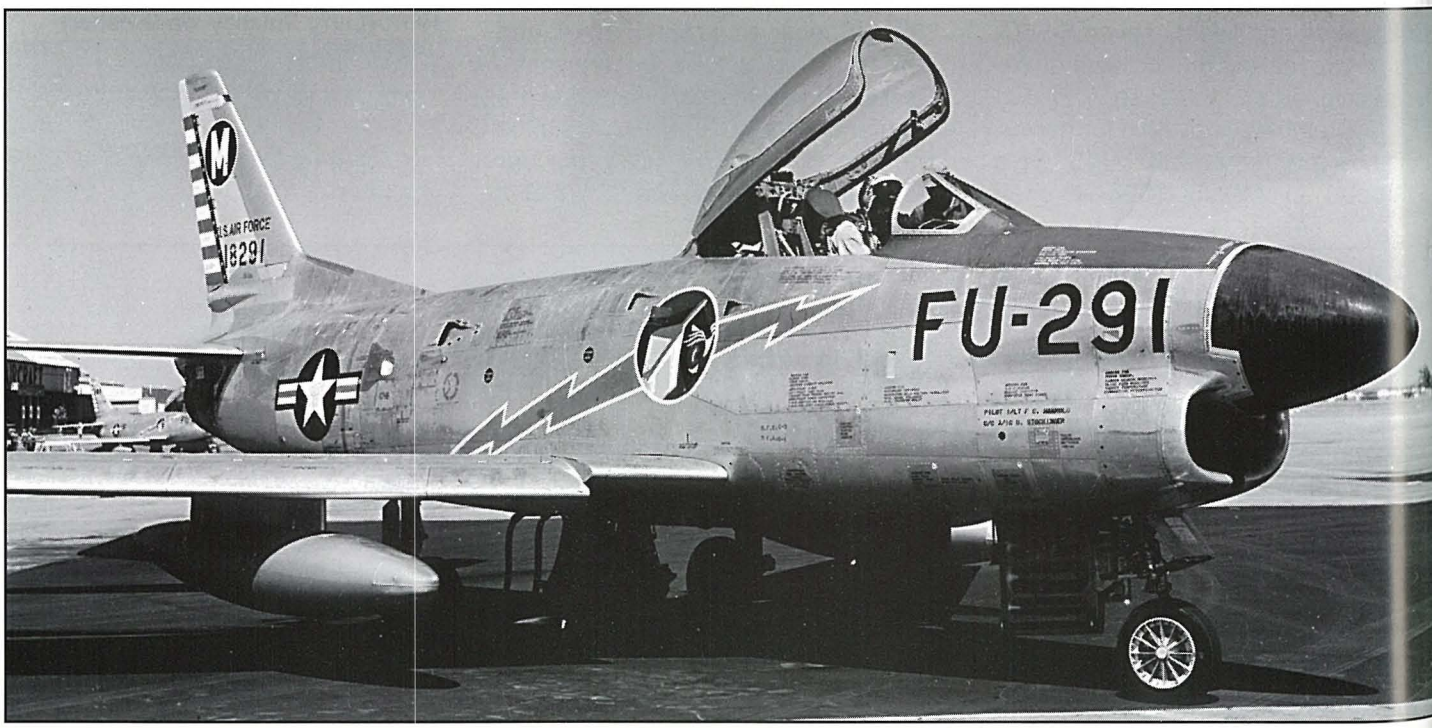
85TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Based at Scott AFB, Illinois, under 33rd Air Division control, the 85th FIS converted from F-51 Mustangs in 1953. F-86Ds began arriving during September and by the end of the year, re-equipping was complete.

Pull-Out modified aircraft then began to replace the original 85th FIS Sabres, and this process began in October 1954. The majority of these aircraft were handed over at McClellan AFB and all were block 31 aircraft. Unusually, all these Pull-Out F-86D-31s were replaced from May 1955 with similarly-modified F-86D-41 aircraft. There then followed an intense period of live firing activity, first to Grandview AFB in Montana (15 June to 19 July 1955) and further to Yuma AFB for one month commencing 10 November 1955. The 85th FIS was transferred to 20th AD control on 1 March 1956.

The squadron lost an F-86D on 3 August 1956 when Tony Skur's aircraft, 52-3868, crashed near Turner AFB in Georgia. A further accident took place on 9 October 1956 when Roger Pile, flying 52-3867, experienced an engine oil pump failure. As pressure dropped, Pile realized that his engine would seize and wisely hit

Above, public relations photo of 85th FIS ground personnel checking the "rag" (towed target) after a live fire sortie at Yuma in 1954. F-86D-35 51-8299 forms as a backdrop. (USAF via Marty Isham) Bottom, the first color scheme by the 85th FIS on its Sabres was undoubtedly its most colorful. The unit insignia was applied to the fuselage side over a large red lightning bolt outlined in white. Tail markings consisted of alternating red and white rudder stripes with small stars arranged vertically over a blue stripe. Each squadron aircraft was assigned a letter, painted in white on a black circle. 51-8291 was delivered to the unit in September 1953. (USAF via Isham)



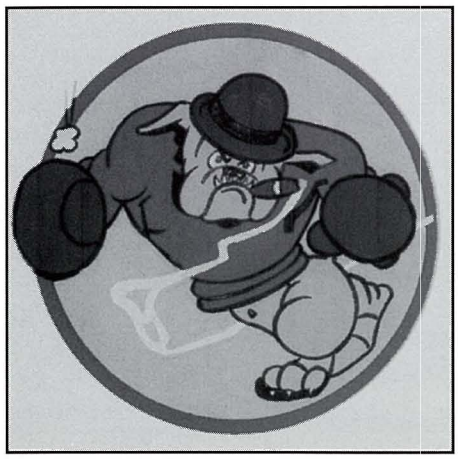
the silk. From 18 October to 2 November 1956 the squadron deployed to Vincent AFB for rocket proficiency training again.

In July 1957, the 85th FIS began to receive newly-converted F-86L aircraft, and the full complement was in place at Scott by the end of September. The F-86Ds in turn were routed back through McClellan AFB and Fresno for similar conversion. Not long after the F-86Ls arrived, two aircraft were involved in a mid-air collision during a night intercept exercise. The accident, which took place on 19 November 1957, cost both aircraft, 53-576 and 53-954. Luckily both pilots, Jim Metz and 'Bob' McDaniel, ejected safely. On 21 July 1958 a further F-86L, 52-10134, was lost after it caught fire on a test flight. Again the pilot ejected successfully.

Further deployments took place during 1958, first to Vincent AFB for one month in June, and then a number of aircraft flew out to Brookley AFB in the first ten days of November. However, despite being one of the USAF's premier F-86 units, the 85th FIS was slated for inactivation and the remaining F-86Ls began to be reassigned in June 1959. The majority went straight to the Texas ANG and the 85th FIS was finally inactivated on 1 July 1959.

Above, the relocation of the U. S. Air Force script to the fuselage side on "Pull-Out" modified aircraft meant that the 85th's badge was relocated to the tail and the lightning bolt was removed from the fuselage. 52-3891 was seen at Oklahoma City and had an ADC Sustained Operational Effectiveness Award painted aft of the intake. (Don Spering collection)

Above, 85th F-86D-40 52-3725 on display at Scott AFB with white wing tanks and pylons tipped in blue with two white stars followed by a red stripe. Wing tank fins were also blue with white stars. (via Fred Roos) Below, F-86L 53-664 at Ellington AFB was painted in silver lacquer. (Don Spering collection)

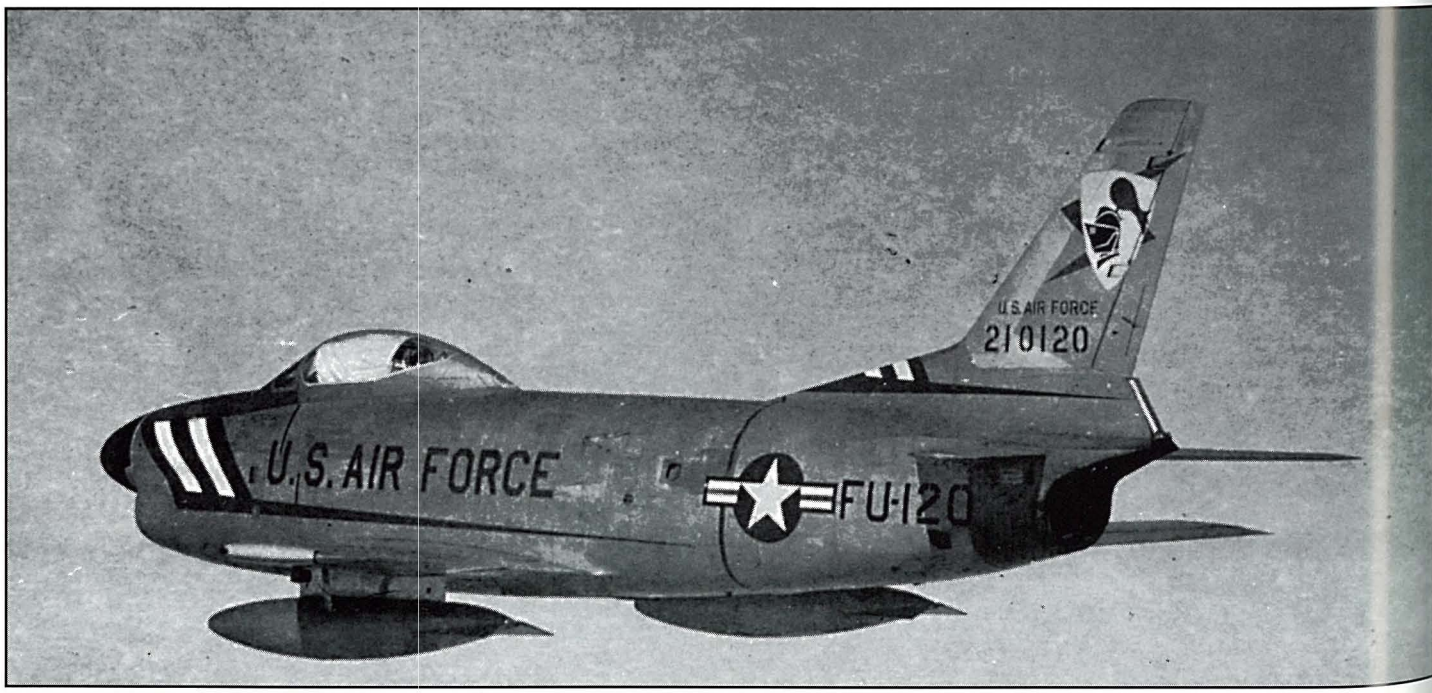


Above, 86th FIS F-86D-50 52-4198 arriving at North American's Fresno plant on 15 April 1957 for conversion to an F-86L. Following modification, it was assigned to the 93rd FIS. Fuselage stripes were green. (North American) Below, green and white trimmed F-86D-50 52-10120 from the 86th FIS with the pilot flying on instruments (note white cockpit hood deployed). The aircraft is flying over the Yuma, AZ, range. 30th AD insignia is painted on the vertical fin. (via Norm Taylor)

86TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Commanded by LtCol Richard G Cross, Jr., the 86th FIS converted from F-84s to the F-86D at Youngstown Municipal Airport during 1953. The squadron was assigned to the 502nd ADG and received its first Sabres – a mixture of 51-fiscal year models – in late July. Fully equipped by October, the 86th FIS then deployed to Yuma for rocket firing in May 1954. In February 1955 the unit received a few post-Pull-Out aircraft, but converted mainly to drag-chute equipped F-86D-45s. With handover completed, in May 1955 Harold E. Collins took over command of the 86th FIS, moving up from Ops Officer. Collins had been a P-38 pilot during WWII, and from 1947 he had been a test pilot at Wright-Patterson. On 1 September 1953, Collins had established a new closed-course world speed record of 707.889 mph in an F-86D and was awarded the General Electric Trophy. Later that year, he became the first American to fly the MiG-15 fighter during tests on Okinawa. Harold Collins remained with the 86th FIS until August 1956.

Project Arrow took effect on 18 August 1955, but the squadron remained at Youngstown and was reassigned back to its historical parent, the 79th Fighter Group. The 86th FIS undertook a further Yuma detachment during February and March 1956, and in March 1957 received its first F-86L. All of the F-86Ds were then routed through Fresno for conversion and the hand-over process was completed in July. However, these F-86Ls saw little service with the 86th; during early August the aircraft began to be reassigned to a variety of other USAF units, and with this process complete, the 86th FIS then re-equipped with F-102As.



87TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Flying out of Sioux City AFB in Iowa, the 87th FIS operated the F-51D Mustang until 1953. At this point the squadron was commanded by WWII Thunderbolt ace Col Michael J Quirk and came under 521st Air Defense Group control. The first Sabres for the 87th were received on 11 September 1953, and these were a mixture of F-86D-20, 25, 30, 35 and 40 aircraft. By the end of the year the unit was fully-equipped. Understandably, conversion from a propeller-driven fighter of WWII-vintage to the USAF's latest interceptor took some getting used to. Chuck Metz joined the unit during this period:

> **"The 87th was a very old squadron that was active in WWII. Many of our pilots were from the old days in Europe. When I joined the squadron in 1953, it was still flying F-51 Mustangs, and it was some months before we got the F-86D Sabre Jet. Not many of our pilots had been to 86 School, and in fact I was one of the only ones. Everyone else had to learn [the F-86D] the hard way! I had to learn the F-51 the hard way! Our sister squadron commander [William Shomo of 14th FIS] had the Medal of Honor for action in the South Pacific."**

Project Pull-Out aircraft began to arrive during July 1954, but the conversion process was incomplete when the squadron was alerted for overseas deployment; only four aircraft had been delivered. Thus, from October to December 1954, the 87th relinquished all its aircraft and prepared for movement by sea to RAF Bentwaters, England. It would pick up new F-86Ds in England, only the squadron personnel actually deploying overseas from the original 87th FIS.

On 13 December 1954, the first personnel began arriving at RAF Bentwaters, and on 21 December the unit was reassigned to the 3rd Air Force, USAF Europe. Newly-arrived in the UK, the 87th FIS was supported by the RAF Manston-based Sabre squadrons of the 406th FIW for administrative and supply purposes. The squadron then began to receive F-86D-45 and –50 Sabres on 2 January 1955. All of these aircraft had arrived by sea at St Nazaire in France during August 1954, but severe corrosion problems incurred on the voyage meant that they required a lot of repair work before they could be released to the squadrons. Chuck Metz recalls that there was much rivalry between his unit and the Manston-based Sabre squadrons:

> **"Since we were already flying F-86s, and had been for some time, it was easy for us to go over as a squadron that could operate 'out of the box', so to speak. We took some spare parts and engines with us, but received new aircraft when we arrived. It took only a couple of months to get all set up and ready to fly, but they wouldn't let us, because of the weather and our lack of experience in England.**

Above, when it arrived in England, the 87th received brand-new F-86D-50s, such as 52-10035 seen here. Harpoon design was yellow outlined in blue. The tail stripes were blue, red and yellow. In September 1955, the squadron was inactivated and the aircraft and unit badge were acquired by the 512th FIS. (Pete Hutting)

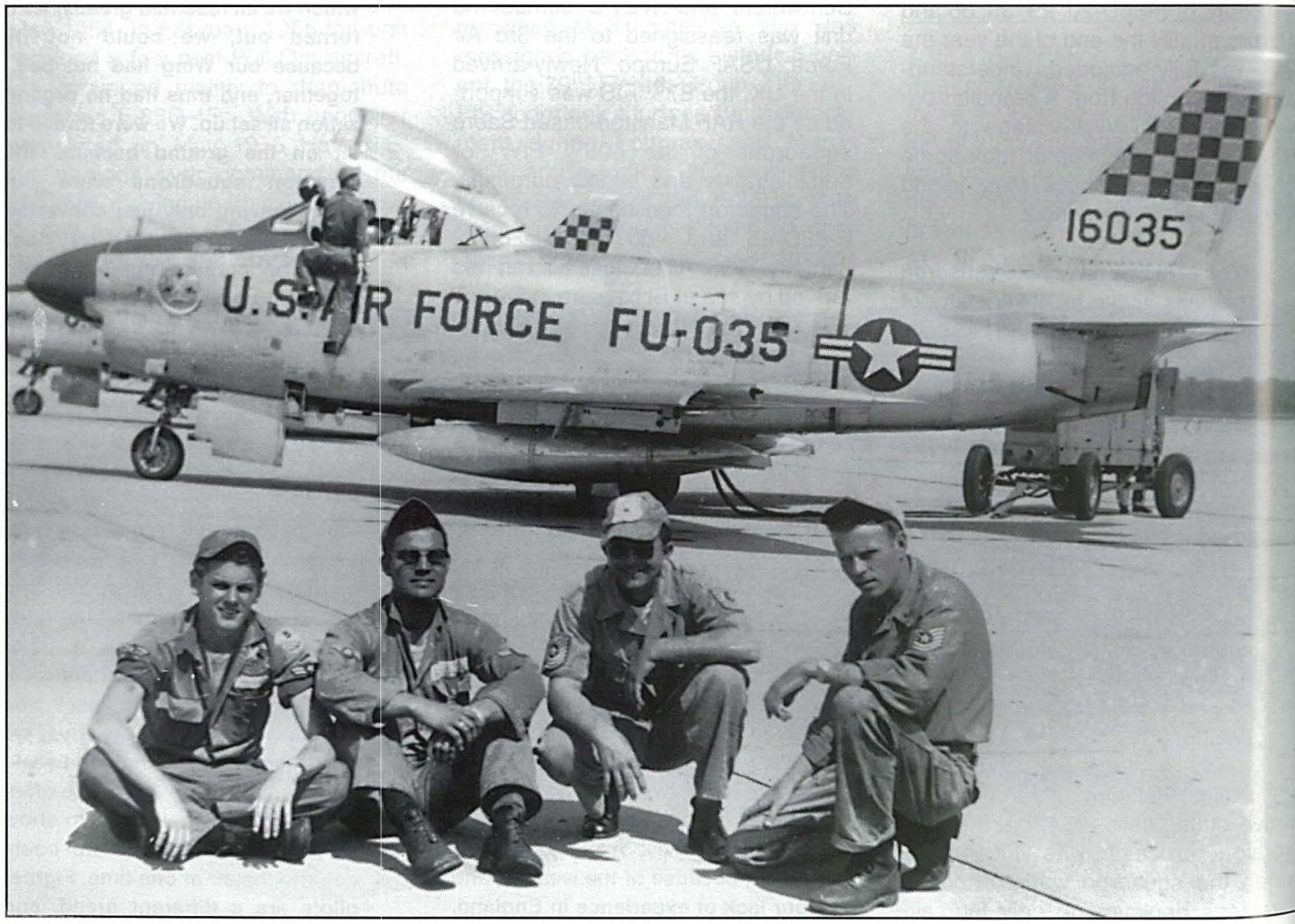
> **That was a sort of slap in the face which we all resented greatly. As it turned out, we could not fly because our Wing had not been together, and thus had no organization all set up. We were forced to sit on the ground because the Manston squadrons were not ready [having only just converted to the F-86D]. This was a very poor thing for morale. This single fact probably caused a bad feeling to develop between us and the Wing."**
>
> **"When we finally did get to fly, we put 26 aircraft in the air and did a mass fly-by on Manston! We did it in very close formation and very low, just to let them know we were there. I doubt that they appreciated that action. We considered that we were heads above the folks 'down there'. Of course, a lot of this was just good clean competition and I don't think there was anything mean about it. Thus, we always took great delight in tweaking them when we could. We often flew down en-masse, just to show them how many F-86s we could get into the air at one time. Fighter pilots are a different breed, and**

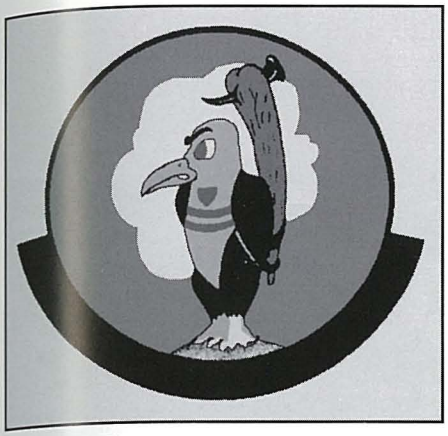
At left, after re-activation in 1956, the 87th FIS adopted yellow and black checkerboard tail markings. This aircraft had two yellow fuselage stripes bordered by black. (Tom Brewer via Isham) Bottom, 87th FIS F-86D 51-6035, like most squadron aircraft, had the unit badge painted on the nose. The aircraft was lost in a crash on 27 April 1957. (C. Koselke via Isham)

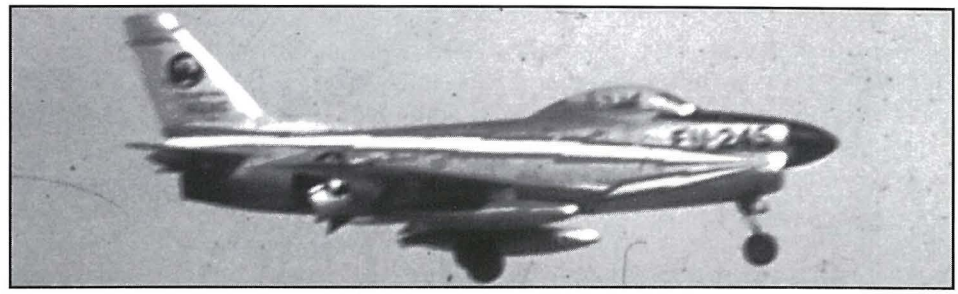
there has to be a lot of spirit in everything they do, or they won't be worth a darn in action. That is, and always has been, the way things are."

The squadron was inactivated on 8 September 1955 and personnel and equipment passed "on paper" to the 512th FIS, whose squadron designation was transferred to Bentwaters on the same day. Mike Quirk thus continued as the 512th FIS Commanding Officer, and the 87th badge and 'Vigilare Pro Pace' motto also passed to the 512th.

However, the 87th re-activated on 8 April 1956 at Lockbourne AFB, Ohio, again with F-86D-31s, and was assigned to the 58th Air Division. The F-86Ds were only retained for a short while, and F-86Ls began to arrive in September 1957; most of the former went to Davis-Monthan for storage. On 1 September 1958, the unit was reassigned to 30th AD control, in preparation for conversion to F-102As. The last 87th FIS Sabres departed Lockbourne on 13 October. It is interesting to note the similarity of the squadron's motto, Vigilantia Est Pax (Vigilance is Peace), with its earlier version, taken over by the 512th.







Above, poor photo of F-86D-35 51-6245 landing during a rocket meet at Yuma in 1954 (see close-up photo of 6245 below). The aircraft sported a giant lightning bolt that ran from the tail to the nose and back to the wing and was white bordered by red. This motif was repeated on the wing tanks. (Isham collection)

93RD FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Assigned to the 34th Air Division, the 93rd FIS at Kirtland AFB was charged with defense of military and atomic installations in the southwest United States. During April 1953, Korean Ace Winton 'Bones' Marshall had handed command of the unit over to LtCol John J. Ruettgers and the squadron began converting from F-86As in August 1953, the first F-86Ds being a mixture of F-86D-20, 30 and 35 aircraft. Most of the F-86As were reassigned to the 15th FIS at Davis-Monthan, though some remained at Kirtland for a long time, unserviceable for lack of spare parts. The last F-86As left Kirtland in late May 1954.

With delivery of the F-86Ds complete, in November 1953, LtCol Ruettgers decided to hold a squadron competition to decide on a new color scheme – the F-86As had worn a simple red/white/red hoop design on tail fin and nose. An enlisted man, (believed to have been A/1C Guy Smith) won the competition and his design – one of the most flamboyant ever seen on a Sabre – began to be applied to all 93rd FIS machines. Smith's design comprised a huge red lightning flash which extended from the nose intake all the way up, over the tailplane and back to the base of the tail fin. A further large lightning flash was positioned below this, extending to the wing root. Smaller single flashes were painted on the vertical fin and below the horizontal stabilizer with pairs of flashes above and below each wingtip. This complex scheme took time to apply, and not all of the unit's Sabres received it. John Ruettgers' plane, 51-6245, wore a variation on the scheme whereby the red areas were filled in by white, leaving just a red border to the lightning bolts. The aircraft wore this scheme when they first deployed to Yuma AFB for rocket firing from 3 April to 8 May 1954. Just over a month after returning to Kirtland, squadron members were again at Yuma, representing the Central Air Defense Force in the first USAF air-to-air rocketry meet. The team placed 4th behind two F-94 units and an F-86D team from the 13th FIS.

The 93rd FIS began pulling alerts almost immediately and lost its first Sabre, 51-6215, on 12 December after a flameout. It crashed five miles from Kirtland, the pilot 1stLt Charlie Pauling ejecting safely.

Inevitably, the early-standard F-86Ds were replaced by Pull-Out modified machines, and thus the 93rd FIS received F-86D-26 and 31 aircraft from NAA Fresno from October to December 1954. All of the out-going F-86Ds were ferried out to McClellan

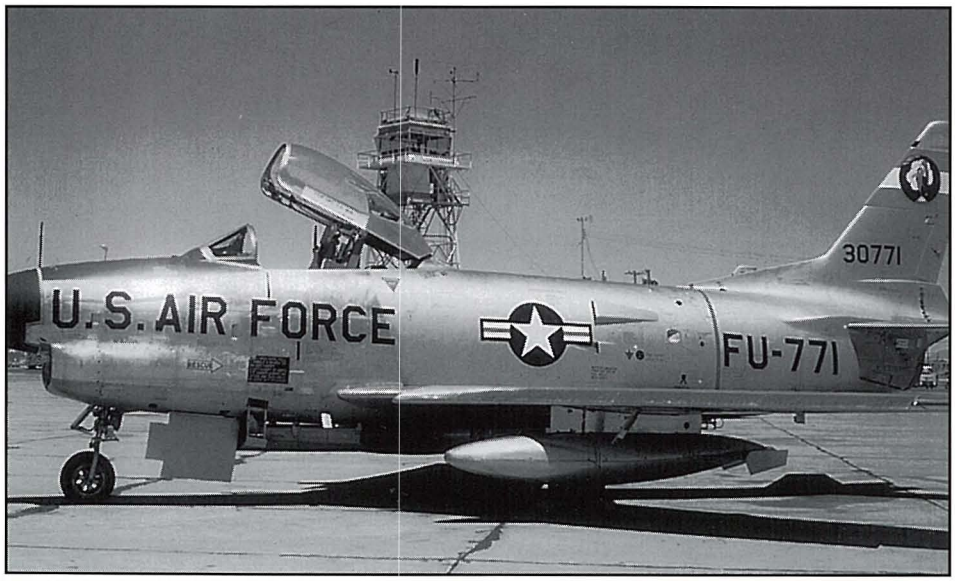
At right, closer view of 93rd's lightning bolt applied to 51-6245 as seen above. The group posing in front of John Ruettger's aircraft contained members of the Hughes E-4 support team which accompanied the Central Air Defense Forces rocketry team to Yuma in 1954. Civilians in the back row are Frank Anderson (left) and Thomas F. Pierce, both Hughes Tech Reps. (Michael P. Jergers)

AFB for conversion, though they were not swapped on a one-for-one basis; a number of the early-model machines had already left the squadron by the time that Pull-Out aircraft became available. The handover period coincided with the arrival of a new squadron commander, LtCol William M. Rowe on 11 October. John Ruettgers immediately left for another Sabre squadron assignment – the 512th FIS in England. Sadly, LtCol Rowe did not retain the unit's earlier markings, the Sabres reverting instead to a color scheme of red and white bands similar to those worn by the F-86As.

Incredibly, the Pull-Out aircraft were in turn replaced, this time by F-86D-41 Sabres from Fresno beginning in May 1955. The latter aircraft had undergone a further upgrade, this time under Project Hop-Up which notably fitted Nadar flight data recorders. Nadar enabled a pilot's intercept steering signals to be replayed after flight for analysis. The entire squadron conversion process was again completed in June 1955, by which time twenty-seven Sabres were assigned. From 8 to 21 December 1955, the 93rd FIS undertook live rocket firing at Yuma and lost its second Sabre, 52-3852, on the final day of the TDY when 1stLt Dewey B. Wofford of 'C' flight experienced a flame-out on take-off from Yuma. The squadron deployed there again following the Christmas break on 3 January 1956. The camp was completed on 14 January. Major W. H. Whitehouse became the new Commanding Officer in April of 1956.

By the beginning of 1957, most ADC squadrons were beginning to finish conversion to the F-86L; not the 93rd FIS however. Indeed, the squadron undertook a further rocket firing detachment to Vincent AFB in July and August with their faithful Dogs. Just prior to deployment the unit had received a couple of F-86Ls, but it wasn't until the crews returned to Kirtland on 9 August that proper conversion to F-86Ls finally began.

Above, red-striped 52-3749 was the F-86D-41 assigned to LtCol Rowe, squadron commander of the 93rd FIS. Tail stripes and nose stripe were red. (Michael P. Jungers) Bottom, F-86L 53-771 in 1958 at Vincent AFB was painted in silver lacquer with red tail stripes. (Michael P. Jergers)



All of the F-86Ds were ferried out to McClellan AFB, and a like number of F-86Ls were picked up at NAA's Inglewood and Fresno plants. The 93rd FIS was one of the last ADC units to receive the F-86L, and the squadron was at full strength by the end of October 1957.

The 93rd FIS then undertook one final deployment to Vincent AFB from 10 May to 7 June 1958 before it was slated for inactivation. And although the 93rd FIS was reassigned to the Albuquerque Air Defense Sector on 1 January 1960, the F-86Ls were ferried out to Davis-Monthan for storage in May and June 1960. The 93rd FIS was officially inactivated on 8 July 1960.

94TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

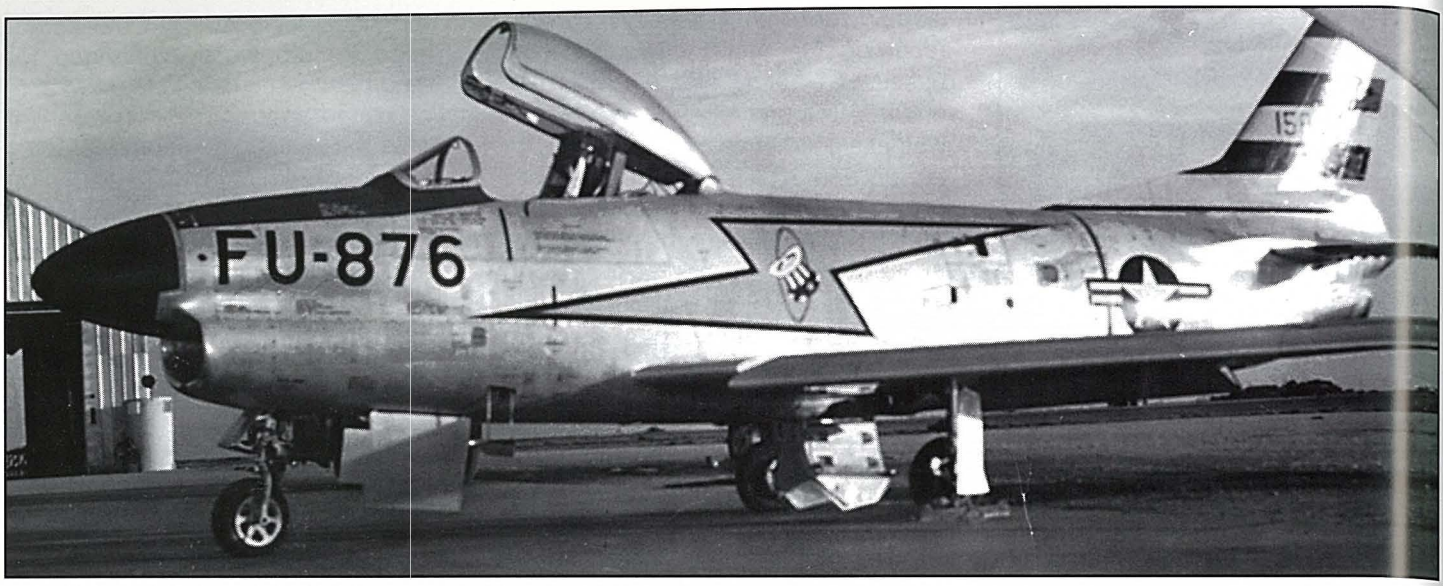
One of the oldest units in the Air Force, the 94th FIS had been instrumental in the Sabre story. Tasked with the air defense of the Los Angeles area, the squadron had been the first to receive F-86As in May 1949 and its proximity to the NAA plant meant that it was tasked with receiving the first F-86Ds. By now based at George AFB in California, under ADC project 3F-213 the unit was assigned twenty-eight F-86D-15, 20, 25 and 30 aircraft starting on 10 February 1953. Coming under 27th Air Division control, the 94th FIS was then charged with undertaking operational suitability trials in 1953. In addition, qualified squadron pilots were also called upon to ferry Sabre Dogs to other USAF squadrons that were just converting to the type. The squadron's six F-86D-15s were reassigned elsewhere during March 1953.

The 94th FIS lost 51-5913 on 15 July 1953 after it was abandoned in flight near Helendale, California. This was one of the first ADC F-86Ds to be written off.

From October 1954, the 94th FIS began to ferry the original F-86Ds out to Fresno where they were exchanged for post-Pull-Out aircraft. These in turn were exchanged for brand-new F-86D-60s in March 1955. The squadron then undertook its first Yuma rocket firing detachment from 1 to 28 July 1955. Most of the squadron then returned to Yuma during the next month, and it was here on 18 August 1955 that Project Arrow transferred the 94th FIS tag back to the 1st Fighter Group control at Selfridge AFB in Michigan. There the unit gained ex-56th FIS F-86D-60s. The Sabres at Yuma were transferred in turn to 327th FIS control.

A little over a year after this changeover, in mid-October 1956 the squadron received its first F-86L. The 94th FIS was one of the first USAF units to be assigned the new type. Incredibly, during this hand-over period the squadron flew out to the renamed Vincent AFB for rocket firing from 11 November to 10 December 1956. It took a mixture of F-86D and L

Above, some of the first F-86Ds assigned to active USAF units, these F-86D-25s at George AFB, CA, arrived at the 94th FIS in March/April 1953.Tail markings were a yellow field bordered by two black stripes with the squadron insignia. (via Norm Taylor) Below, modified markings are seen on 94th FIS F-86D-60s at Yuma in July 1955. The vertical and horizontal tail surfaces had alternating yellow and black stripes and a giant yellow lightning bolt outlined in black on the fuselage side. (Isham collection



aircraft with it.

Upon return from Vincent the conversion onto F-86Ls was completed and by January 1957 a full complement of F-86Ls was on-hand. The squadron undertook a further Vincent deployment during February and March 1958, and rather unexpectedly flew the F-86L until F-106As were received in April 1960. Surviving Sabres were ferried out to Davis-Monthan.

Above, large fuselage lightning bolt with Hat In The Ring insignia on 51-5876 at Selfridge AFB in 1954. (via N. Taylor) Below, Hat In The Ring F-86L poses with Hat In The Ring Spad. 94th markings changed again with arrival of the F-86L. Unit badge is on the nose and ADC badge is on the tail. (via N. Taylor) Bottom, 53-915 at Selfridge AFB. (R. Volker via Fred Roos)

Above, anonymous aside from the fuselage-mounted unit badge and blue rudder, 51-8386 served with the 95th for one year from October 1953 through October 1954. It is seen here at Bolling AFB open house in May 1954. (Ron Picciani via Isham) Below, close-up of the more colorful unit markings adopted in late 1954 applied to F-86D-55 53-600. The squadron's insignia was surrounded by blue horizontal stripes. (Jeffries via Isham)

95TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

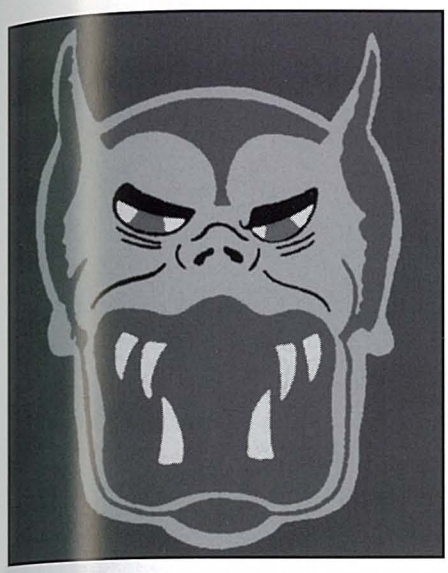
The 95th FIS converted from F-94B Starfires to the F-86D at Andrews AFB in Maryland as only the third USAF unit to receive this model. The unit was assigned to the 4710th Air Defense Wing and tasked with defending the nation's capital. The first four F-86D aircraft were assigned on 5 May 1953 and re-equipment was completed during July. The squadron appears to have had a good safety record, but lost a few aircraft; the first involved 51-5933 which crashed one-and-a-half miles south of Andrews AFB on 15 June 1954 after hydraulic power was lost.

The 95th FIS bypassed Project Pull-Out and instead, from December 1954, brand-new F-86D-55 and 60 machines were delivered. The majority of initial issue F-86Ds then passed through NAA Fresno for conversion. The squadron undertook its first Yuma deployment from 12 July to 6 August 1955.

On 1 March 1956, the 95th FIS was transferred to 85th Air Division control, and then flew out to Vincent AFB for 30 days of live firing on 21 October 1956. During February 1957 the first F-86Ls arrived and right through May they replaced the F-86Ds on a one-for-one basis. Newly re-equipped, the 95th FIS then set out for its third rocket firing deployment to Yuma/Vincent AFB from 6 July to 2 August 1957.

Finally, in December 1957, the squadron received its first F-102A Delta Dagger and the F-86Ls were ferried out from that point onwards. Most of the Sabres went to other ADC units, such as the 15th FIS, 85th FIS and 87th FIS. The last aircraft was flown out on 27 February 1958.

Above, 95th FIS F-86D-55 53-667 at an open house in 1955. Stripe aft of the intake was red. (via Don Spering) Below, F-86D-55 53-600 was the Commanding Officer's aircraft. Tail and fuselage stripes were blue and nose stripe was red. (via Larry Davis, Isham collection) Bottom, with receipt of the F-86L, the 95th reverted to a more mundane color scheme. 53-597 was assigned only briefly, from March through December 1957. (R. Parmenter via Isham)



97TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Based at Wright-Patterson AFB and tasked primarily with defense of the test airfield, the 97th FIS had flown F-86Es for some years under 4706th Air Defense Wing control. In the first week of June 1953, the squadron received its first F-86Ds and by the end of October the unit was fully-equipped with the Sabre Dog.

The 97th immediately conceived a special color scheme for its aircraft, and applied a large red "devil cat" logo along the fuselage along with large 97, in keeping with the squadron insignia. Topping-off this unusually flamboyant color scheme, many squadron aircraft also bore personalized "nose art".

In November 1954, the 97th FIS began to receive brand-new F-86D-55 and 60 aircraft, and the older Sabres were flown out to Fresno and McClellan AFB for routing through Project Pull-Out conversion. The new 53-fiscal year Sabres also received the "devil cat" fuselage design, along with a new raft of nose art. From 13 June to 13 July 1955, the squadron was deployed to Yuma AFB for rocket firing.

Sadly, Project Arrow deprived the world of one of the best Sabre color schemes when the 97th name was transferred to an F-94C unit on 18 August 1955. At the same time the unit was transferred to 82nd FG control, and all of the Sabres were given to the 56th FIS at Wright-Patterson.

Above, 97th FIS Sabre Dogs carried a red devil cat insignia along the fuselage side. In this case the design was highlighted by white. (Picciani) Below, this 97th Sabre has added two red tail stripes and red-white-blue nose art "Buckeye Born". Drop tank trim was red. (D Ostrowaski via Isham)

Above, 97th FIS aircraft with "Road Runner" figure and wording painted in yellow outlined in black on the nose. A red devilcat was applied to the fuselage. Two red stripes were on the tail and the wing tanks were trimmed in red, too. 53-704 appeared briefly in the film "Project X" and is now preserved at Travis AFB, CA. (D. N. Drew via Isham collection) Below, 317th FIS F-86D-35 51-8377 in early 1954 with a white tail and wide red tail band with a white lightning bolt. (via F. Klaiss, Isham collection)

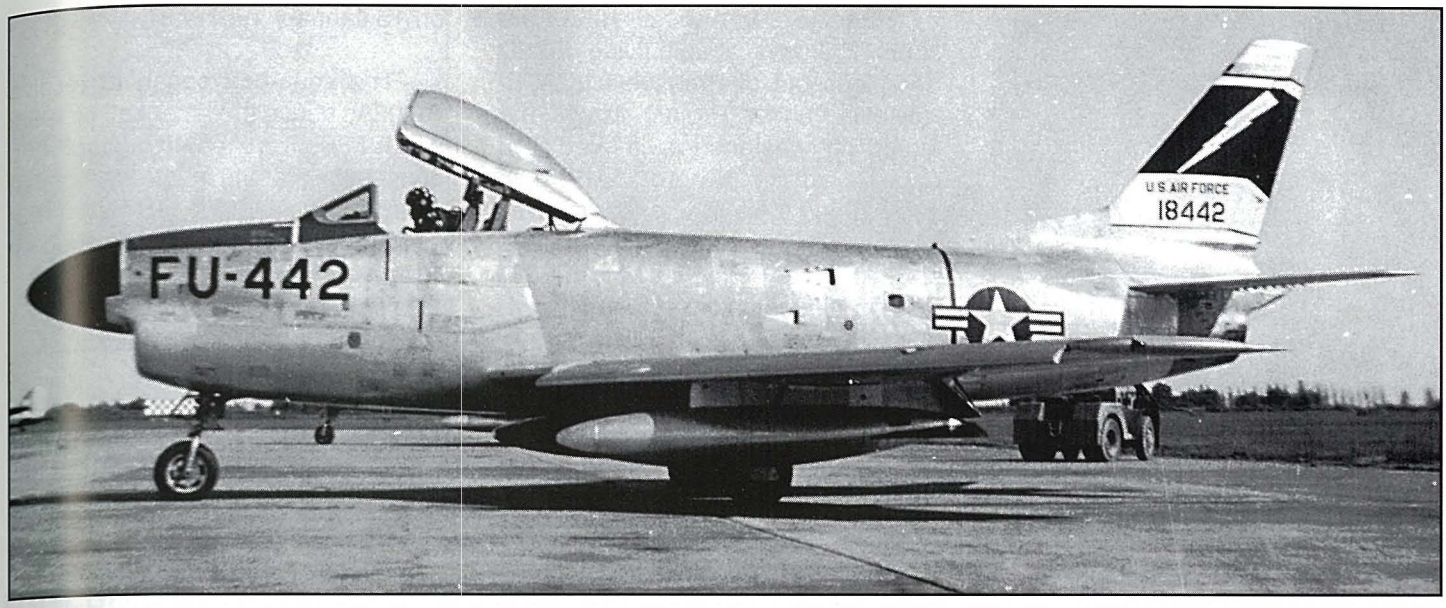
317TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Assigned to the 567th ADG and flying out of McChord AFB, Washington, the 317th FIS flew the F-94 Starfire until the autumn of 1953. At that time F-86Ds began to arrive with the squadron, the first examples being assigned on 17 September. Initial tail colors for the unit comprised a white lightning flash against a broad red border, outlined in white.

From September 1954 newly-converted Pull-Out F-86D-26 and –31 Sabres began to be exchanged for the older models, and beginning in November 1954 a number of Pull-Out Sabres were also gained from the 465th FIS at McChord. With these modified aircraft, the 317th FIS deployed for rocket firing to Yuma AFB from 25 January to 23 February 1955. The unit's color scheme changed quite markedly with receipt of the newer aircraft. More subdued tail markings were applied, this time with two white, angled (almost horizontal) lightning flashes against a red tail band. However, this colored band was located at the top of the tail fin and only covered the top third of the surface, rather than the whole tail of the previous design.

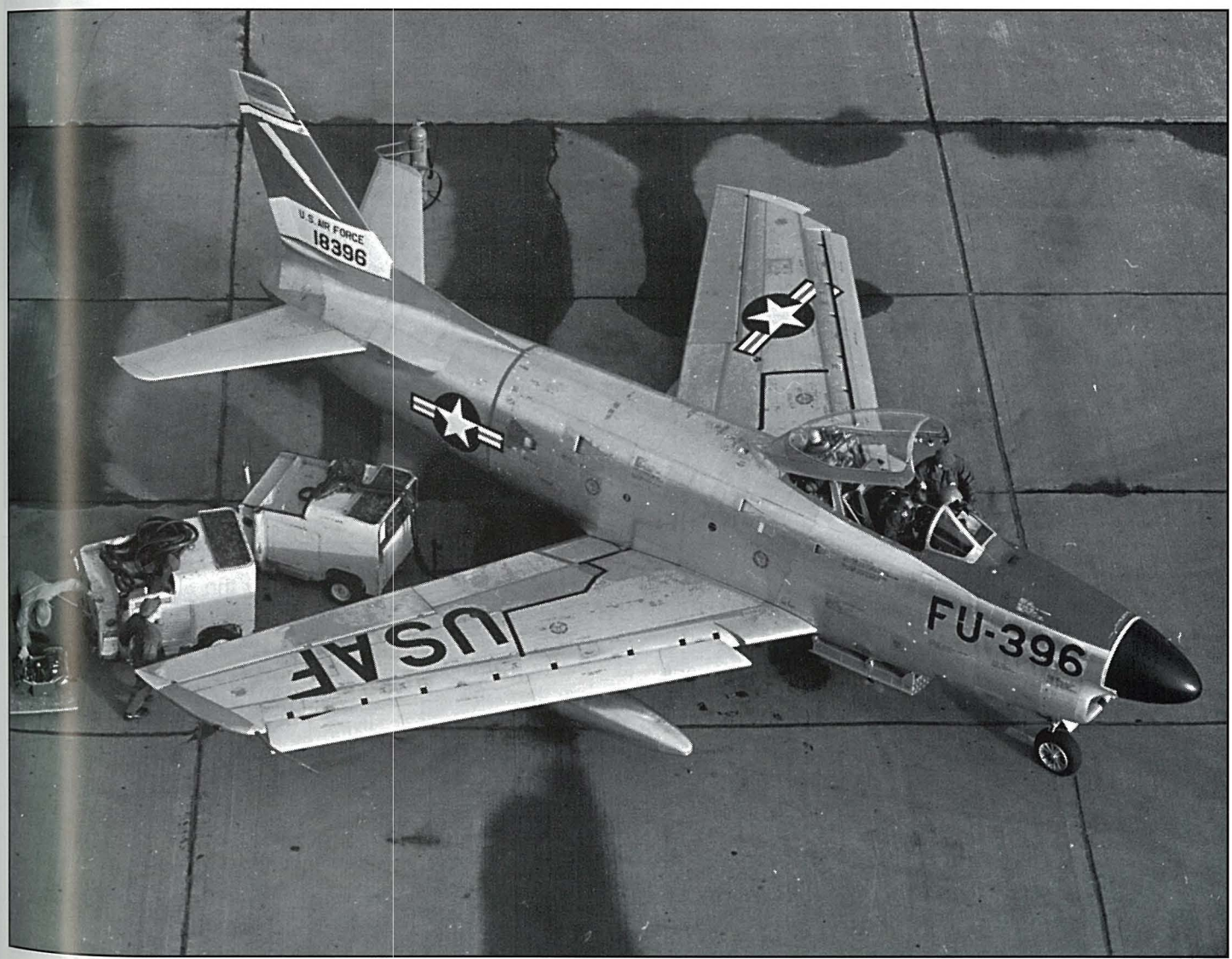
Soon after returning from Yuma in 1955, the 317th FIS again re-equipped, this time with brand-new F-86D-60 aircraft although the final few were not delivered until 15 August. Three days later under Project Arrow, the squadron was reassigned to 325th Fighter Group control, but remained at McChord.

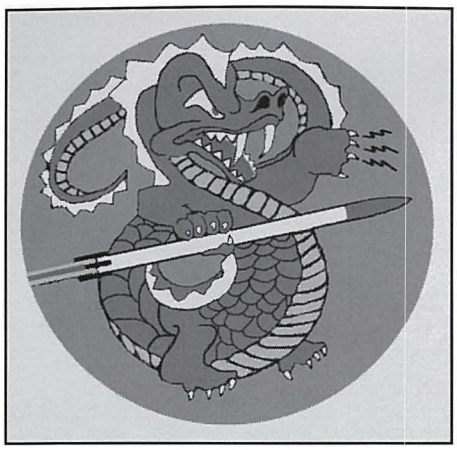
The squadron then became one of the first USAF F-102A units in mid-1956 and from July to October of that



year, all of the squadron's F-86Ds were ferried out to the three F-86L conversion lines.

Above, 51-8442 only served with the 317th for a short period from April through December 1954. It was one of the last pre-Pull Out Sabres with the squadron. (J. Geer via Isham) Bottom, seen on 10 December 1953, F-86D-35's tail markings were red and white. This aircraft was transferred to the Republic of China AF in 1960. (USAF via Isham)





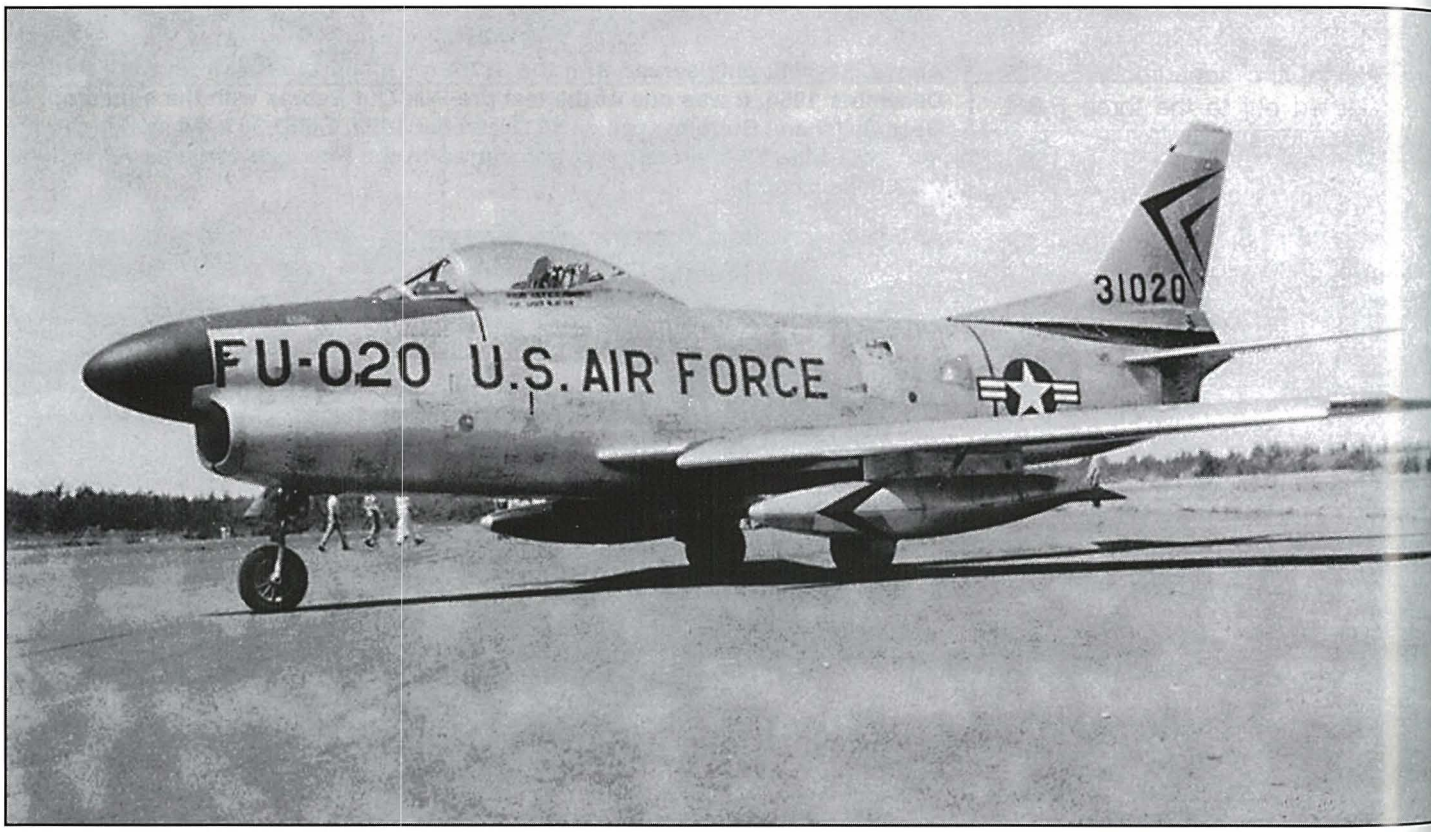
318TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

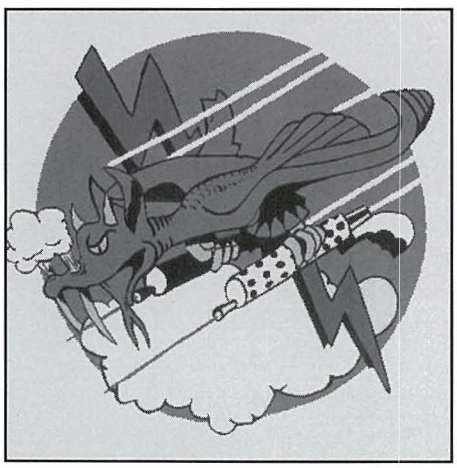
Prior to 18 August 1955, the 318th FIS was a unit flying F-89D Scorpions out of Presque Isle AFB. However, under Project Arrow, the squadron designation moved "on paper' to McChord AFB in Washington state. There the unit was assigned to the 325th Fighter Group and assigned twenty-three F-86D-60s from the inactivated 465th FIS and two from the 327th FIS.

While at McChord, the 318th FIS took in one Yuma weapon detachment from 3 to 22 January 1956. The squadron also only lost one aircraft: 53-1009, which was destroyed by fire on 15 January 1957.

The squadron began to receive F-102As during the latter half of 1956, and F-86Ds were ferried out for F-86L conversion starting in late May of that year. The final 318th FIS Sabre, 53-1046, was flown out to Inglewood on 11 March 1957.

Below, 318th FIS Sabres wore a yellow tail with black trim. F-86D-60 53-1020 was later transferred to NAS China Lake, CA, as a target aircraft. (Brian Baker)





321ST FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Activated at Paine AFB in Washington state under the 529th Air Defense Group on 18 August 1955, the 321st FIS initially gained up to half a dozen F-86D-55s. These aircraft came from the 83rd FIS at Paine AFB, but the days of the Sabre were short-lived. Soon after the squadron activated, it was decided to re-equip with the F-89D Scorpion, and the Sabres were passed to other ADC units, mainly the 329th FIS. The last F-86D was ferried out from Paine AFB on 1 December 1955.

The 321st FIS was the shortest-lived F-86D unit within USAF, and never became fully operational on the type.

322ND FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

One of a number of squadrons which were activated under Project Arrow, the 322nd FIS came into being on 18 August 1955 and was assigned to the 9th Air Division. The squadron concurrently received personnel and F-86D equipment from the inactivated 31st FIS at Larson AFB. Most of these aircraft were F-86D-60s, and on 17 March 1956 the unit deployed to Yuma AFB for one month's rocket firing.

During November 1956, the 322nd FIS received its first F-86L aircraft, and the old F-86Ds were ferried out, mainly to Fresno and Inglewood. On 1 December 1956, the squadron transferred to 4721st Air Defense Group control, although it remained stationed at Larson. The last F-86Ds were lost in February 1957, although F-86Ls were still being assigned in to the unit for some months after this.

In a short time, the squadron then undertook a number of deployments, first to Wendover AFB in October 1957, then to Vincent AFB the following month, and back to Wendover again in February 1958. Further live rocket firing detachments took place at Tyndall AFB during June 1958, and the squadron again visited Vincent AFB for one month starting on 5 September.

Into 1959, the 322nd FIS yet again flew out to Vincent for most of January before returning to face conversion onto the F-101B Voodoo. A number of F-86Ls were then ferried out to McClellan AFB for overhaul.

Although the squadron moved to Kingsley AFB in Oregon and reassigned to the 408th Fighter Group on

Above, taking over aircraft from the 31st FIS, markings of the 322nd FIS were similar and continued to be used on the latter's F-86Ls. 53-1070 has a yellow tail with black trim, yellow canopy frame and a yellow and black check mark on the nose. Squadron insignia was located below the back of the canopy on the fuselage side. (Ron Picciani via Isham) Below, F-86L-60 53-1049 in flight in 1957. (Ron Picciani via Isham)

Below, the WADF on the rudder of 53-3677 stands for Western Air Defense Force. The aircraft wore this legend during the 1958 USAF Worldwide Rocket Meeting. The aircraft wears an ADC "A" award pennant. This F-86L was photographed at Tyndall AFB on 26 October 1958. (William Swisher)

1 April 1959, a detachment of F-86Ls was retained at Larson AFB until mid-May. From that point onwards, all 322nd FIS Sabres were flown directly to Boise and handed over to the Idaho ANG. The last aircraft left Kingsley in early July 1959.

Above, F-86L-60 53-3677 seen at Tyndall AFB on 26 October 1958. Canopy frame was yellow. (William Swisher)

323RD FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Flying from Larson AFB and assigned to the 4702nd Air Defense Wing, the 323rd FIS converted from F-51 Mustangs to the F-86D in early 1953. The squadron was the second front-line USAF unit to receive F-86Ds, and was assigned its first Sabres, one dash-25 and a dash-30 on 15 April. In line with many of the early F-86D units, the 323rd FIS did not receive its full complement until some months later, and it was late October by the time that the last Sabres arrived.

A number of squadron aircraft then deployed to Geiger AFB in May and June 1954 concurrent with the arrival of post-Pull-Out Sabres. The whole unit then deployed to Yuma for rocket firing on 21 September for one month. The 323rd FIS transferred to the 9th Air Division on 8 October 1954. The squadron transferred-out a number of F-86Ds to McClellan AFB in May and June 1955, until under Project Arrow all of the 323rd FIS Sabres at Larson were transferred to the 538th FIS.

At the same time, on 18 August 1955, the 323rd FIS name was transferred to Truax AFB in Wisconsin, taking over mainly F-86D-60 aircraft from the 432nd FIS. At this time the unit transferred back to its traditional 327th Fighter Group control.

Above, sister unit to the 31st FIS at Larson, the 323rd FIS developed a similar color scheme, this time using red and black for the forward fuselage check mark. The tail stripe was red outlined by black. The squadron insignia was on the fuselage aft of the canopy, but was moved to the tail on later aircraft. Photographed in 1955, 51-5949 was an F-86D-30. (H.P. Saabye via Isham)

However, Sabre operations at Truax were short-lived; in the spring of 1956 the 323rd FIS received its first F-102A and the F-86Ds were flown out to the F-86L conversion lines. The last aircraft left in early October of that year.

324TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Activated on 18 October 1955 at Westover AFB in MA, and assigned to 4707th Air Defense Wing control, the 324th FIS didn't receive its first F-86D until early February 1956. The unit then quickly equipped with F-86D-31s and a couple of F-86D-26s straight from Pull-Out conversion. The unit transferred to the 4622nd ADW on 18 October 1956. While at Westover, the 324th stood alert duties with the 337th FIS, even to the point of having four additional alert hangars added onto those already in place. Westover therefore became one of the few USAF bases stateside to have eight alert barns, instead of the normal four.

Conversion to the F-86L began during October 1957, the F-86Ds being ferried out to the conversion lines in an exchange process. Re-equipment was complete by early December. The unit had earlier transferred under 4279th Air Defense Group control on 8 July 1957 and subsequently reassigned to the Boston Air Defense Sector on 25 June 1958.

Vincent deployments had begun for the 324th FIS on 15 November 1956 when the unit deployed for one month's rocket firing. A mixture of F-86Ds and F-86Ls was taken to the subsequent deployment in October and November 1957.

In early 1958, the unit was alerted for a permanent move to Sidi Slimane AB in Morocco, and from early March the unit's F-86Ls were transferred to other USAF and ANG units.

The squadron's new complement would be formed by F-86D-41 and –45 aircraft ferried by sea from Brookley AFB specifically for the 324th FIS. The move was officially completed on 1 July 1958, but most of the Sabres did not arrive at Sidi Slimane until the first week in August.

Concurrent with the move to Morocco, the 324th FIS was reassigned to the 316th Air Division control on 1st July.

From early January 1959, all of the unit's F-86Ds were gradually rotated through IRAN at FIAT, Turin, though their days were numbered. On 8 February 1960, the first F-86Ds were ferried out to Chateauroux AB in France, and the final Sabres departed on 24 February. The 324th FIS was officially inactivated on 8 March 1960.

Above, once in Morocco, the squadron insignia was relocated onto a white band outlined in red on the vertical fin. (USAF via Burger) Below, F-86D 51-6062 at Westover AFB in early 1958. Prior to deploying to North Africa, 324th FIS Sabres were painted in this scheme, with red lightning bolt on the tail fin and drop tanks. (Candid Aero Files via Curtis)

325TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Originally operating F-86E aircraft from Travis AFB in California, the 325th FIS moved to Hamilton AFB on 10 February 1954 in order to convert to the F-86D. Concurrently, the unit transferred from 28th Air Division to 566th Air Defense Group control. The initial twenty-two F-86Ds were all D-40 models and were delivered straight from Inglewood from 24 to 26 February 1954.

The 325th FIS was already famous for its "Sabre Knights" aerobatic team, having used the F-86E since April 1953. It therefore seemed obvious that the squadron would continue the team when the F-86D came along. And there was good reason for this, despite the Dog being less suitable for aerobatics than the day fighters: North American wanted to promote the F-86D and shed its image of being unreliable and unmaneuverable. (It *was* compared to the F-86E/F, but then again, the Dog was a complex bomber/destroyer, not a dogfighter). As if to underline this, once adept at flying the F-86D, the Sabre Knights led by LtCol Vince Gordon performed on every F-86D pilot graduation ceremony at Perrin AFB in the last half of 1954 and the first half of 1955.

During September 1954, six of the squadron's F-86D-40 aircraft were exchanged with the 94th FIS so that the

Above, Sabre Knights demonstration team going vertical. Note the shape of the intake belly design. (MFR) Below, Sabre Knight flightline at the start of a show. Tail stripes were red/orange and deep yellow. Red/orange nose markings are bordered by yellow and "Sabre Knights" is yellow bordered by red/orange. (R. Volker via Fred Roos)

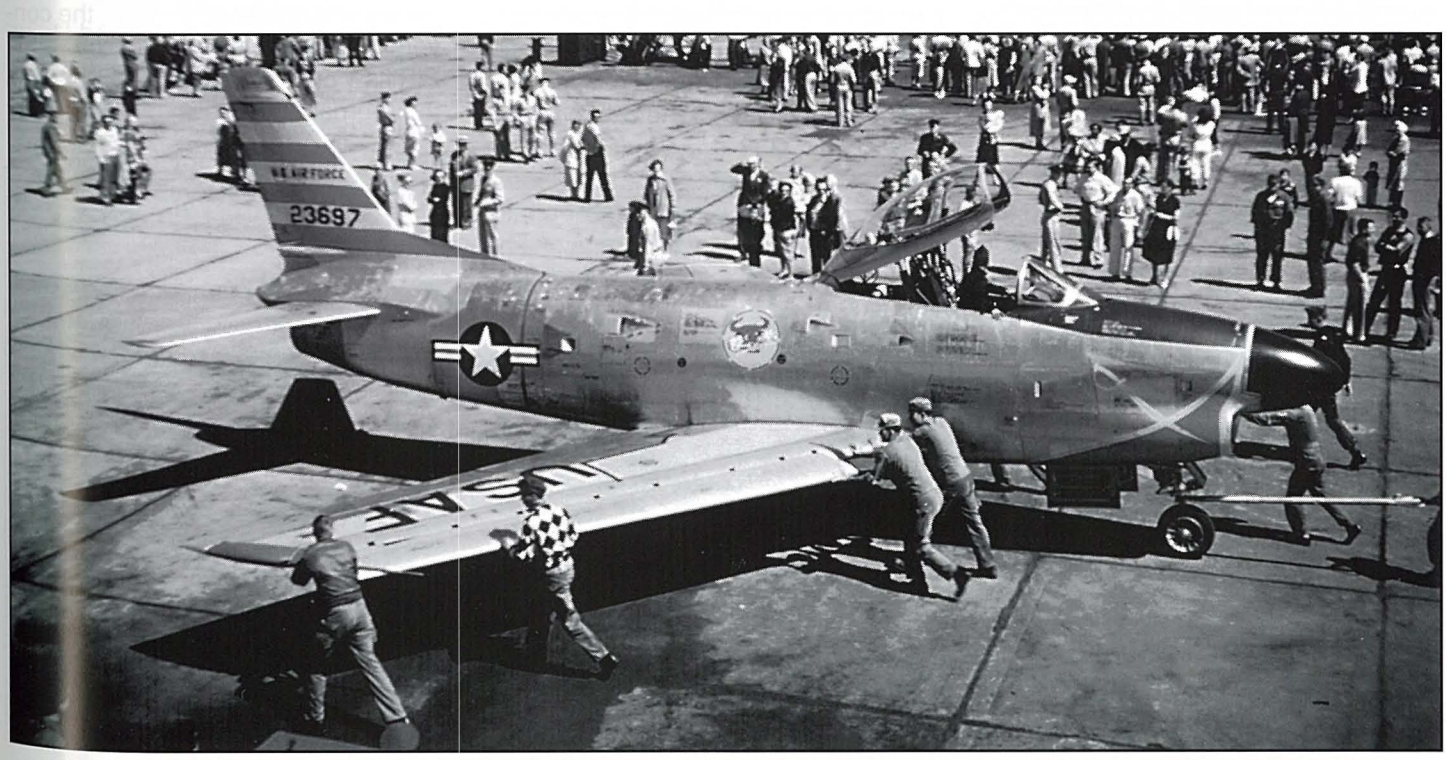
Sabre Knights could receive six of the first Pull-Out configured Sabres – four F-86D-26s and two F-86D-31 machines. (Incidentally, this seems to have been the reason that the 94th FIS adopted the 325th FIS-style red and yellow striped tail fin color scheme at around this time.) This meant that the unit operated a mixture of aircraft with and without drag 'chutes for six months, although in reality the aerobatic team machines were seldom used for mundane squadron flying.

On 3 March 1955, the 325th FIS received its first F-86D-60 aircraft straight from the production line; a further twenty-five D-60s and a single D-55 arrived with the squadron by the end of April. At this time, the early non-Pull-Out aircraft were transferred out for conversion, and the six modified aircraft loaned from the 94th FIS during September 1954 were reassigned to the 3625th CCTW at Tyndall AFB. Unusually, because the squadron operated the Sabre Knights aerobatic team as a near enough full-time outfit, a further six F-86D-36 aircraft were transferred to the 325th FIS in April and May 1955 solely for aerobatic team use.

Incredibly, amid all this turmoil the 325th FIS managed to complete a Yuma rocket deployment from 20 May to 16 June 1955.

Above, F-86D-35 51-6221 at Detroit airport, MI, in July 1955. Stylized deep yellow sabre is above Sabre Knights script on the nose. The team badge has been added to the tail. (Dave Menard via Norm Taylor) Below, 52-3697 being pushed out for a show at Travis AFB, CA, on 15 May 1954. (H. Rued via Kaston)

On 18 August 1955 Project Arrow took effect and the 325th FIS name was transferred to Truax Field in Wisconsin. The Sabres at Hamilton were transferred to the 83rd FIS, including the six aerobatic team aircraft although the team itself disbanded at around this time.



Above, F-86D-40 52-3756 on 26 September 1954. Normal squadron aircraft lacked the Sabre Knights logo on the nose. (William Swisher) Below, after Project Arrow took effect in August 1955, the 325th took over the 456th color scheme and the unit badge was changed to the one at left. Lightning bolt was dark blue bordered by yellow. "The Shamrock" was written on the nose. (Sam O'Neill via Wogstad, Isham collection)

At Truax, the 325th FIS took over the F-86D-60s previously assigned to the 456th FIS. It concurrently transferred to 327th FG control alongside the 323rd FIS at Truax, also flying the F-86D. The 325th FIS then took in a Yuma deployment from 4 November to 1 December 1955.

Incredibly, in all the time that the squadron had flown the F-86D in California, not one aircraft or pilot was lost. It thus seemed inevitable that the record would not last long, and sure enough on 25 May 1956 the unit at Truax lost its first F-86D in a flying accident. Departing Truax at 1010 hours that day, 2ndLt Clyde Jackson was one of a flight of four Sabres scheduled for a local VFR mission to practice tactical formation, VOR approaches and simulated engine flame-outs. Thirty minutes into the sortie Jackson experienced a loss of cockpit pressurization and also noted that his canopy was fogging up; his flight leader advised him to pull-out of formation to clear his screen. By using the windshield defroster he was able to clear his canopy, but in the meantime had lost sight of the formation. The flight leader advised him to return to Truax and shoot some VOR approaches.

Unfortunately, before he got there the forward fire warning light in Jackson's Sabre began blinking – a sure sign of impending engine fire. Upon closing the throttle the light extinguished but was replaced by an illuminated aft warning light. As he was now over Lake Koshkonong and without floatation gear, Jackson decided not to eject; instead he decided to glide for a forced landing in the nearest available field. He could not reach any airfield by this time. With canopy jettisoned and flaps lowered, Jackson deployed his drag chute as soon as he had touched down. He travelled 300 yards across a field and through a line of willow bushes before his left wingtip dug in and caused the aircraft to cartwheel. The Sabre broke into three parts: forward fuselage, tail section and wings before coming to rest 3 miles west of Jefferson, Wisconsin. Incredibly, 2ndLt Jackson escaped with only minor injuries but his Sabre, 53-1024, was a complete write-off.

Late in 1956 the squadron began to prepare for the arrival of Convair F-102As, and the first F-86Ds were retired for F-86L conversion in mid-December. Once the Delta Daggers began to arrive in early 1957, the conversion process was swift. The 325th FIS flew out its last Sabre, 53-929, on 28 February.

326TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

The 326th FIS was activated on 18 December 1953 at Fairfax AFB in Kansas under LtCol Ellis Wright. However, no fighters were received at Fairfax, and on 1 March 1954 the unit moved to Grandview AFB in Missouri. Assigning to the 4676th Air Defense Group, the squadron received its first Sabre on 2 March, which along with all other Sabres handed over to the unit at this time was an F-86D-40. All 23 Sabres received by the 326th FIS came straight from the NAA production line, and initial equipping was completed on 9 April. One of this initial batch, 52-3837, was lost on delivery on 1 April. Elliott P Smith was with the squadron at this time and recalls:

> **"I believe that there was [a] plane that never made it to our base from the factory. I have a letter home that mentions losing a plane because the pilot fell asleep and/or lost oxygen and ran out of fuel."**

A further aircraft from the initial allotment was lost on the ground soon afterwards; a badly secured starter lead shorted out and ignited fuel vapor. The resultant explosion blew the bottom out of the Sabre and rendered it fit only for spares reclamation. Fortunately no one was injured.

Before the end of 1954, squadron markings began to be applied, consisting of a yellow diagonal tail band, yellow fuselage stripe and an inverted "harpoon" design on the forward fuselage. All the yellow areas were bordered with thick black lines and the fuselage band also had three black F-86D plan-view silhouettes painted onto it. Unfortunately, more aircraft were lost at the turn of the year, 52-3776 on 6 December and 52-3662 on Christmas Day. A third machine, 52-3878, crashed on 3 April 1955, according to Elliott Smith:

Above, 326th flight line at Grandview AFB. Wing, tail stripes and intake checkmark were yellow outlined in black with three aircraft stenciled on the fuselage stripe. (Elliott P. Smith) Below, 326th F-86D-41 at the Yuma rocket meet in July 1955. (E. P. Smith)

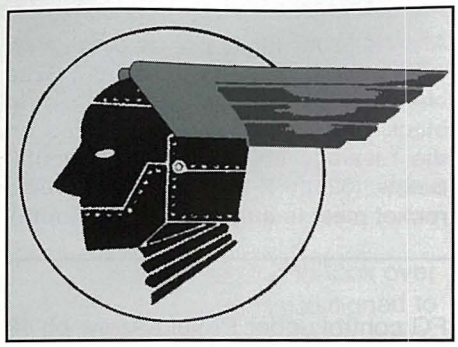
> **"[One of the F-86Ds] was piloted by Lt Harlow who ejected OK. I believe it went down after a flame-out north-east of Grandview, maybe over Illinois. One happened at Grandview. I was OD in the alert hangar control room watching a night mission land. One D landed short striking the embankment at the runway approach. The plane broke in half. I ran to where I saw fire and it was just the rear half. The front with the pilot was further down the runway. The pilot was OK. We were concerned because the plane had a load of live rockets."**

These pre-Pull-Out Sabres were retained until March and April 1955 when all the survivors were ferried-out to Fresno for conversion. In their place, thirty F-86D-41s were received, again from Fresno. The squadron then took in a Yuma deployment from 8 July to 5 August before being reassigned to the 328th FG control under Project Arrow on 18 August 1955. Sadly, the Yuma deployment took the lives of four key squadron personnel. On one evening, the Operations Officer, GE Tech Rep, Security Officer and an F-86D pilot decided to spend a night on the town. Shortly after leaving Yuma AFB, their car was involved in an accident and all were killed. It was a tragic blow to the squadron, especially coming as it did during the unit's annual rocket camp – a time when crews looked forward to a busy but enjoyable change from the routine.

Unlike many other units affected by Project Arrow, the 326th FIS remained at its former base, and deployed from Grandview to Vincent AFB for its second rocket firing camp in October and November 1956.

Early in 1957, F-102As began to arrive with the 326th FIS and from 16 January the Sabres were reassigned. Most went to the 13th and 14th FIS at Sioux City, though some of the last to

leave were taken over by the 173rd FIS Nebraska ANG. The final F-86D to depart was 52-3773, which was flown to the 14th FIS on 23 May 1957. Grandview had been re-named Richards-Gebaur AFB in April 1957.



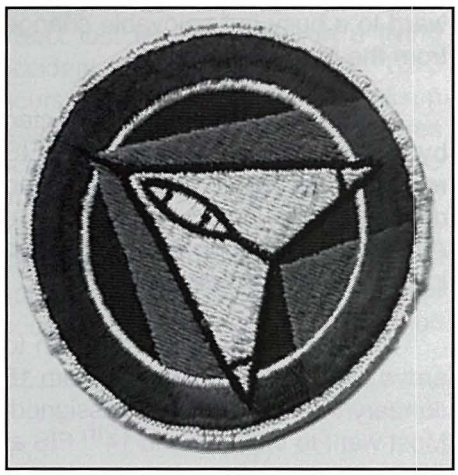
327TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

The 327th FIS was activated as part of Project Arrow on 18 August 1955 at George AFB in California and assigned to the 27th Air Division. The squadron took over 94th FIS F-86Ds after the latter had transferred to Selfridge AFB. The majority of Sabres were F-86D-60s, and as the 94th FIS had been at Yuma on rocket firing when 'Arrow' took effect, the 327th FIS completed the deployment and returned to George AFB on 24 August 1955.

On 30 January 1956, three of the squadron's Sabres were scrambled from George AFB in response to an order from the 27th Air Division. The scramble was relayed to the 327th FIS at 1653 hours PST and the trio of Sabres was airborne within five minutes, flying under the callsign 'Dispute Able'. Leading the mission was 1stLt Thomas R Burnes (aircraft 53-989), with 1stLt Richard McKibben (53-923) as number 2 and finally 2ndLt Marcel Zobrak in 53-982 as number 3. Their target was a group of six B-47s and upon completion of the intercept at 1727 hours, all three F-86Ds were routed to land at Oxnard AFB. With 1500 pounds of fuel aboard each aircraft, the leader contacted the GCI site and was given permission to let-down his formation in trail. Unfortunately, upon handover to Oxnard GCA, radio problems were experienced and with dwindling fuel, each aircraft elected to divert to nearby Palmdale. Able 3 eventually made it to Edwards AFB and landed at 1806. Able 2 managed to return to George; both aircraft flamed out while taxiing after landing.

Of Thomas Burnes there was, sadly, no trace; his aircraft had disappeared from radar screens 20 miles west-southwest of Palmdale. An explosion in the area was later reported by the area sheriff; 1stLt Burnes had been killed instantly as his aircraft impacted with Mount Gleason.

The 327th FIS received F-102As in April 1956 - the first USAF unit to do so – and the Sabres were reassigned elsewhere from that point. Most went to other ADC units, though by early May 1956, when the last F-86Ds departed, a number were routed through North American's Inglewood plant for conversion to F-86L status.



329TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

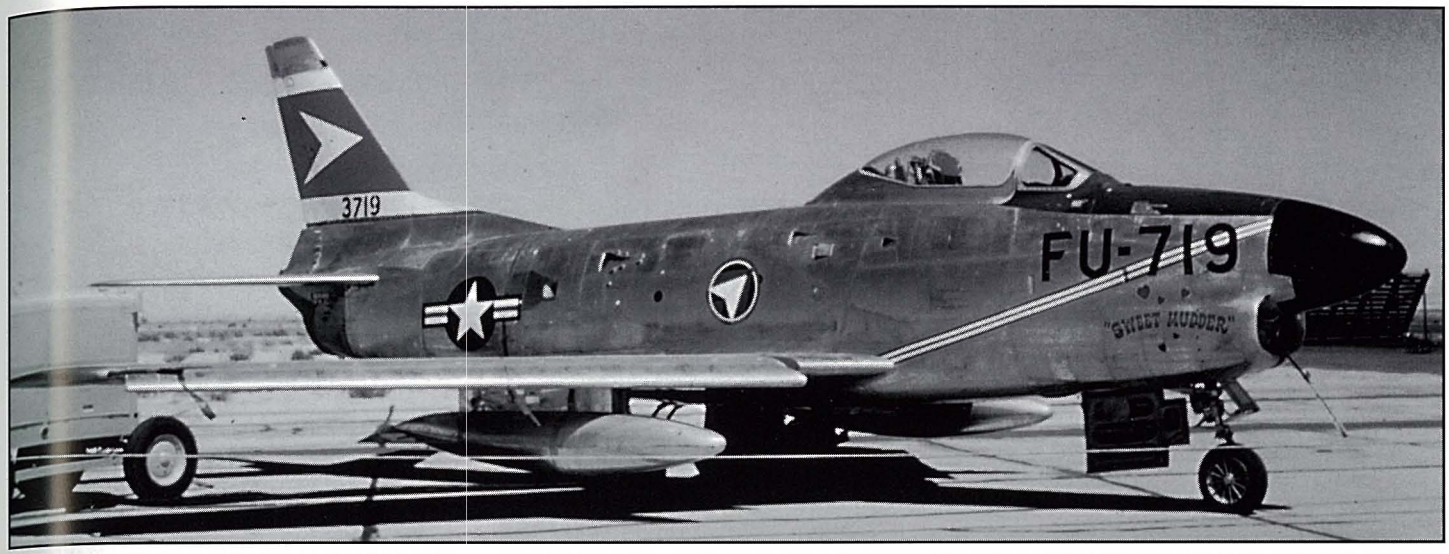
Activated at George AFB, California, on 18 August 1955, the 329th FIS was assigned to the 27th Air Division alongside the 327th FIS. Like its sister squadron, it gained F-86Ds (mainly –60 block) from Project Arrow realigned squadrons, although those gained by the 329th FIS came from a variety of sources, mainly the 518th FIS at George AFB and the 83rd FIS at McChord.

Above, 329th FIS standardized this color scheme for both F-86D and F-86L aircraft. 53-677 was trimmed in red and white with the unit badge on the mid-fuselage. Converted to an F-86L, this aircraft passed to the Royal Thai AF. (J. Michaels via Isham)

The squadron then flew out to Yuma for live weapon firing on 1 December, returning three weeks later. Unusually, the 329th FIS then deployed to Oxnard AFB in California during late May and early June of 1956 to allow the unit's Sabres to fire rockets from the Navy's Point Mugu range. The 329th FIS was reassigned to the 4722nd Air Defense Group on 1 December 1956 and took in another live fire deployment to Vincent AFB from 21 January to 17 February 1957.

Charlie Arnet, a young Second Lieutenant, arrived straight at the 329th from flying school:

"We had three Commanders while I was there: Bud Hoerner, Lou Grillo, and Fred Krause. Ops Officers were Jess Yaryan and Zack Forester. We shared the base with the 479th TFW (F-100Cs); Commander, "Ravin' George Lavin". Robbie Risner was there as



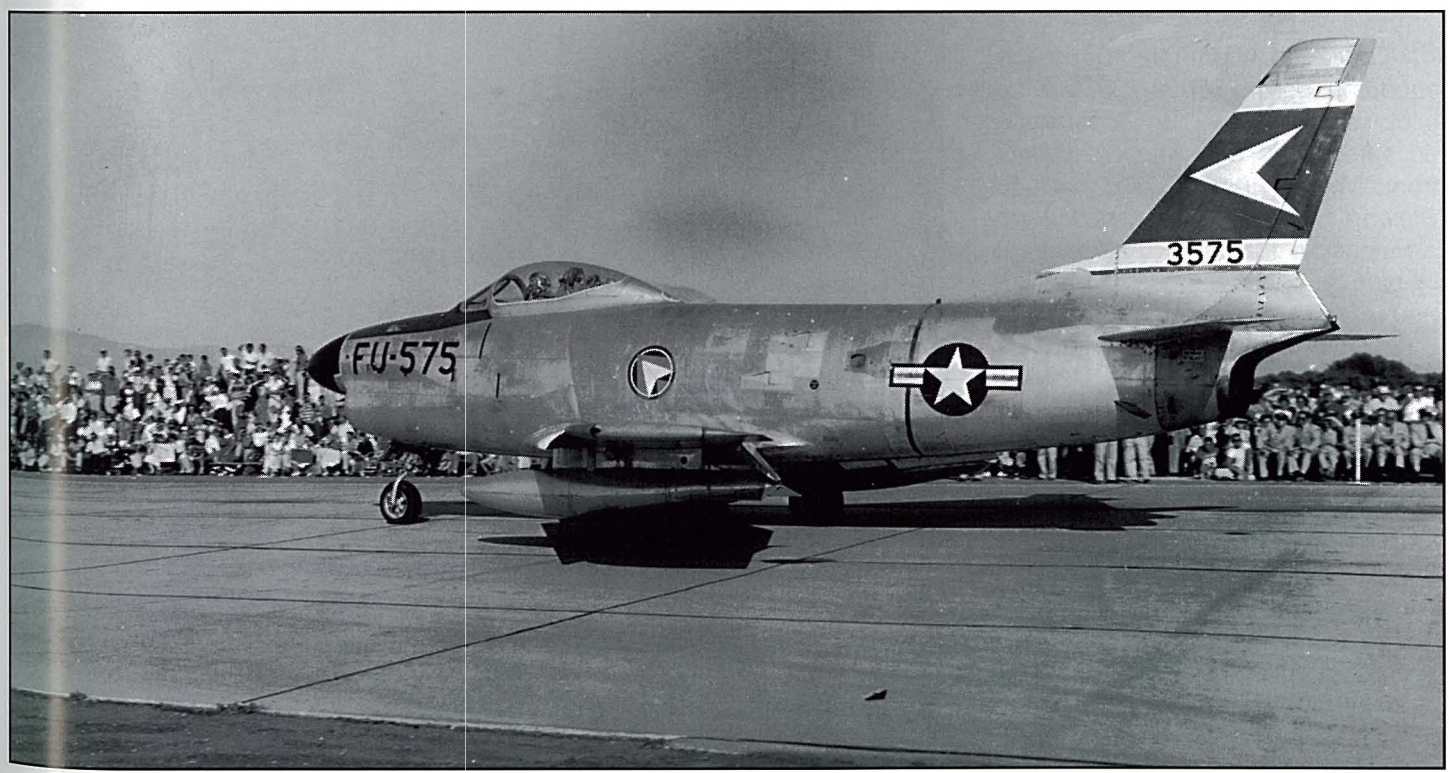
a Squadron Commander. There are plenty of good stories, such as Col Hoerner standing up in the cockpit of his airplane and pissing on the instrument panel as a comment on his bird's airworthiness... When Capt Repko, Maintenance Officer, learned of it, he flew the airplane without a parachute and beat up the field with it...".

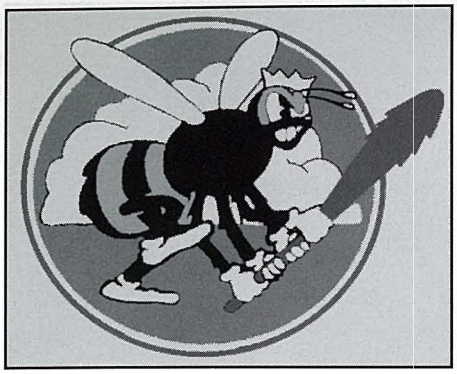
"I recall the loss of two airplanes: One, known as the the fastest bird in the squadron, blew-up on take-off and Mel Flemming ejected safely. The other flamed-out on takeoff and Al Lomax rode it in, receiving moderate injuries."

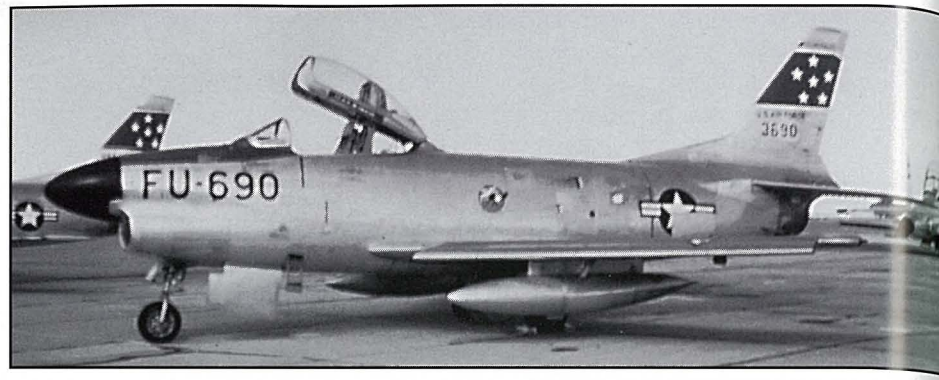
In common with a few other ADC Sabre squadrons, the 329th FIS took a mixture of F-86D and L aircraft to Vincent – the first of the latter had arrived with the squadron soon after deploying. On completion of the TDY at Vincent a number of F-86Ds were flown straight to Inglewood and Fresno, and by the end of October the last F-86Ls were in place.

In the spring of 1958, the first F-102As arrived with the 329th FIS, and at the beginning of March the first Sabres were flown out. All of the squadron's F-86Ls were reassigned to the 197th FIS Arizona ANG at Phoenix, and the last left George AFB on 7 May 1958.

Above, "Sweet Mudder" (painted in red) 53-719 at George AFB in July 1958. Forward fuselage stripe was white and red as were the tail markings. (R. Yocum via Isham) Bottom, F-86D-55 53-575 passes-in-review during open house at George AFB on 16 September 1956. (William Swisher)







330TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

The 330th FIS, based at Stewart AFB, New York, had flown F-86F Sabres since 1953. In September 1954 the unit transferred to the 4700th Air Defense Group and prepared for conversion to the F-86D. However the first "Dogs" did not arrive until 7 January 1955, finally allowing the F-86Fs to stand down during the following month.

All of the F-86Ds for the 330th FIS were F-86D-55 aircraft, delivered directly from North American. The last of twenty-seven such machines was delivered on 4 March 1955. On 18 August 1955, the unit was reassigned under Project Arrow to the 329th Fighter Group control, but remained at Stewart AFB.

On 29 December 1955, the squadron lost F-86D 53-725, but the pilot, 1stLt Richard A. Edwards, ejected safely. Edwards was on a flight from Wright-Patterson AFB back to Stewart when a snowstorm enveloped the area. Two attempts at landing at Stewart were made, but these were unsuccessful and Lt Edwards then tried to divert, first to La Guardia airport and then to Mitchel Air Force Base; both attempts proved fruitless. Realizing that he could never get his aircraft on the ground with the fuel available, Edwards calmly pointed his Sabre out into the Atlantic and ejected. He landed 150 yards out in East Bay near Merrick and was picked up by a Police launch less than 30 minutes later. Though suffering from exposure, he recovered fully from his ordeal.

The squadron took in two Yuma/Vincent AFB detachments: first from 13 January to 11 February 1956 and then in 1957 from 3 January to 1 February. However, by the time of the latter, the squadron had begun conversion onto the F-86L, and the first F-86Ds were routed through the conversion lines from the beginning of March 1957. This conversion process was completed in June.

The unit's first Vincent deployment with F-86Ls took place from 17 March to 18 April 1958 and soon after the 330th FIS returned, the first Sabres began to be reassigned to other units. However, this process was slow and the last aircraft were not lost until June and July 1959. These remaining machines went mainly to Air National Guard squadrons. The 331st FIS was inactivated on 1 July 1959.

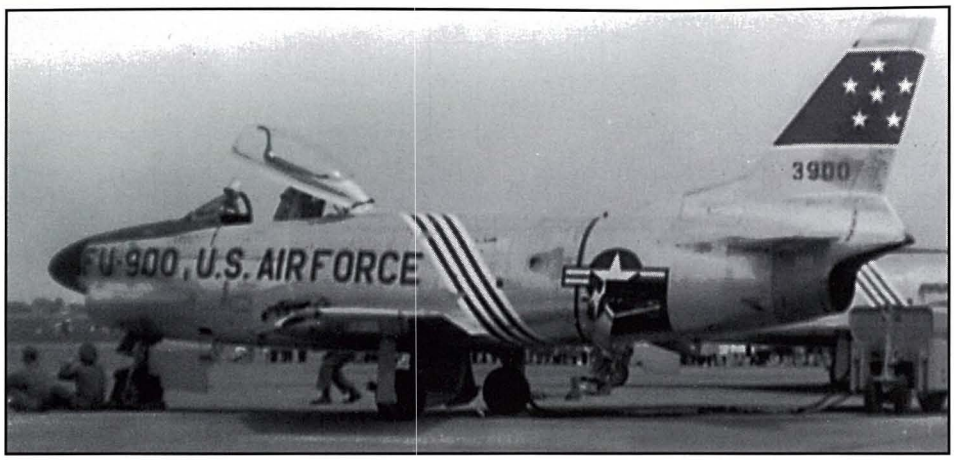
Above, 330th FIS 53-690 at Stewart AFB in 1955 had a blue tail band outlined in white with six white stars. The squadron's insignia was painted on the fuselage side. (D. Hostetter via Isham) Below, 330th FIS F-86Ls wore a white hawk perched on a gloved hand over a two-tone stripe which was red at top and green at the bottom. (Jack Friell) Bottom, F-86L in May 1957 belonging to commander of 329th ADW which was the parent unit for the 330th and the 331st. Tail markings were those of the 330th and the fuselage bands were black and white. (Pete Kane via Isham)

331ST FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Activated in February 1953 with F-51s at Suffolk County AFB in New York State, the 331st FIS was initially assigned to the 519th Air Defense Group. The first F-86Ds for the unit – dash-20, 25 and 30 aircraft – arrived on 23 June 1953 and conversion to the Sabre was completed in October.

The squadron gained post-Pull-Out aircraft from July 1954, as well as some

At top, when the 330th deployed to Vincent AFB in January 1957, it had already started to receive F-86Ls. The squadron took both models. Aircraft devoid of markings are F-86Ls; the F-86Ds have had two extra stars added to their tails. (Otto Loorents) Above, 331st 53-941 accompanied the squadron to Yuma in February 1956. Tail band on 331's aircraft was red. (D. Cleeton) Bottom, crew chief of 53-996 prepares pilot for a live fire mission at Yuma in February 1956. (D. Cleeton via Isham)



At left, unlike Sabres of the 330th, 331st aircraft rarely carried the squadron insignia. Fuselage bands denoting the squadron commander's aircraft was red and white. (D. Cleeton via Isham) Bottom, F-86L 51-3013 at Webb AFB in August 1959. The nose and a wide fuselage stripe forward of the horizontal tail were da-glo red. The vertical tail stripe was red. (via Don Spering)

F-86D-45 and 50 aircraft, and the unmodified machines were ferried-out to Fresno and McClellan AFB until December of that year.

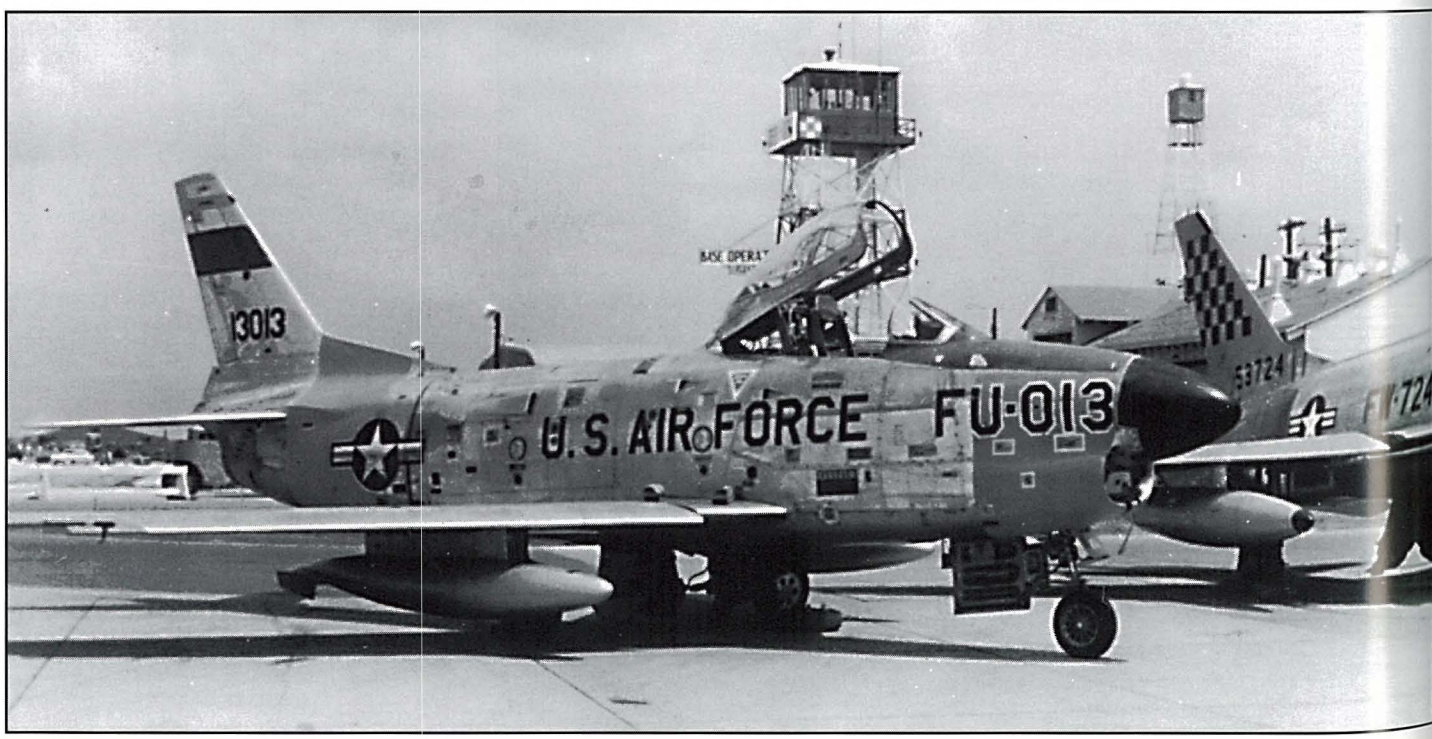
On 18 August 1955, the 331st FIS was reassigned under Project Arrow to the 329th Fighter Group and the designation moved to Stewart AFB, taking over the 539th FIS F-86D-55 and -60 aircraft there. This positioned the squadron alongside its sister unit, the 330th FIS. Meanwhile, the Sabres left at Suffolk County were transferred to the 5th FIS. Whilst at Stewart, the 331st FIS performed its first Yuma rocket firing detachment – from 8 February to 9 March 1956.

From mid-November 1956, the first F-86Ls arrived, though conversion was slow – aircraft were still being assigned as late as May 1957. All the F-86Ds had been sent to the conversion lines by that point. Meanwhile, on 1 February 1957 all the 329th FG Sabres at Stewart were pooled together under the 329th Consolidated Logistics Maintenance Squadron control and color schemes were toned down.

The squadron again visited Vincent AFB from 10 March to 15 April 1957, but appears not to have returned in the following year. By mid-1958 the squadron was given notice of a Permanent Change of Station, this time to Webb AFB in Texas. As a result, F-86Ls were detached to Webb from 1 August, and on 15 August the squadron officially moved into its new base. Concurrently, the 331st FIS was reassigned to the 33rd Air Division control.

At Webb AFB, squadron markings were very muted, comprising high-visibility fuselage da-glo bands and sometimes a small squadron badge on the vertical tail. One further deployment took place too - to Brookley AFB in Alabama from 9 to 30 March 1959. However, the squadron was marked down for conversion to the F-102A Delta Dagger, and the first aircraft arrived in early 1960. In preparation, the 331st FIS had been reassigned to Albuquerque Air Defense Sector on 1 January 1960.

The final F-86Ls were reassigned to the Texas ANG at Dallas during March 1960.



332ND FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Another Project Arrow squadron to change over to F-86Ds, the 332nd FIS had until August 18, 1955, been flying F-94Cs at McGuire AFB in New Jersey. On that date, the 2nd FIS at McGuire was renamed the 332nd FIS and assigned to the 4709th Air Defense Wing. The majority of squadron Sabres were brand-new F-86D-60s, and a handful of further airframes were delivered from North American at the end of September.

From 17 March to 17 May 1956, the squadron took part in live weapon firing at Yuma, and on 1 October that year the unit reassigned to the 4621st Air Defense Wing control.

F-86Ls (mainly dash-60s) were received in bulk during December 1956, and the 332nd FIS's last F-86Ds were flown out for conversion by the end of the first week in January 1957. Almost immediately the squadron flew out to Vincent AFB for further weapons training, and returned to McGuire on 2 March 1957. During the Vincent deployment, on 8 February, the 332nd FIS transferred further to the 4730th Air Defense Group control.

Late in 1957 the unit received its first F-102As and the remaining F-86Ls were ferried out. Many went to the 539th FIS at McGuire and the last were transferred out on 31 July 1958.

Above and at bottom, 53-4032 with red band and five white stars on the tail carries the unit's badge on the fuselage side. (via Freeman) Below, 53-4021 was piloted by Capt. C.G. Manning; fuselage bands were red. (R. Parmenter via Isham) Bottom, 332nd FIS Sabre in flight. (USAF)

Above, 337th F-86L's only markings were the squadron insignia on the tail. 53-991 was lost in a flying accident in April 1958. (R. P. Willet via Isham)

337TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

On 18 August 1955, the 60th FIS at Westover AFB in Massachussetts changed its name to the 337th FIS under Project Arrow. The aircraft were mainly F-86D-55s and the squadron was assigned to the 4707th Air Defense Wing. Taking over command of the 337th FIS at this time was none other than LtCol James Jabara, the Korean War ace.

The squadron took in one Yuma detachment with F-86Ds, from 7 June to 6 July 1956. On 18 October that year, control of the squadron passed to the 4622nd Air Defense Wing.

The 337th FIS then began receiving F-86L-45, -55 and -60 aircraft in April 1957, with F-86Ds passing to conversion lines by the end of July. Concurrently, control of the 337th FIS again changed, this time to the 4729th Air Defense Group on 8 July 1957.

The squadron then began converting to the F-104A in early 1958, and this allowed many of the F-86Ls to pass to the 324th FIS in order that the latter could remain current of the Sabre prior to deploying to Africa. The 324th FIS took over alert duties for the 337th FIS during the conversion onto the Starfighter.

Some F-86Ls remained with the 337th FIS until July 1958, by which time the unit had been assigned to Boston Air Defense Sector control.

Above, 339th FIS Sabres wore an impressive black harpoon design across the fuselage side outlined in red. Tail markings were a white lightning bolt on a black band bordered in red. (D. Woodward via Isham)

339TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

The 339th FIS transitioned from F-94 Starfires to the F-86D in July 1955 at Chitose AB in Japan. The squadron also lost the last of its F-86Fs at the same time. Few details are known of this unit, which operated mainly 51-Fiscal year F-86D-36s. However, 339th FIS Sabres carried some of the most eye-catching markings ever seen: the main fuselage was painted with a red-bordered black harpoon design, which swept back from the intake area and over the fuselage upper surface to meet the harpoon on the opposite side. The harpoon motif was repeated on the drop tank sides, while on the vertical fin, a white lightning flash was painted over a black band, the latter again outlined in red.

The 339th FIS was inactivated in January 1958. The squadron had been initially assigned to the 5th AF (attached to the 4th FIW from 18 September 1954 to 15 January 1958), then to the 39th Air Division on 1 March 1955.

Above, 354th FIS Sabres were unusual in using green as the main squadron color. 52-10174 has green and white trim. Fuselage bands were common to all squadron aircraft. (Col. W.M. Lewis via Isham) Below, 354th aircraft seen at Yuma AFB in June 1956. (Picciani via Isham)

354TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

On 18 August 1955 under Project Arrow, the 354th FIS tag, previously assigned to an F-94C squadron at Oxnard AFB, was reassigned to McGhee-Tyson AFB in Tennessee. There it was taken over by the F-86Ds previously operated by the 460th FIS under 355th Fighter Group control. The squadron's aircraft wore the same checkerboard color scheme as its sister squadron, the 469th FIS, though the 354th FIS aircraft wore green and white checkers. Major Rhodes Elam continued as the unit commander, and was replaced by Col Joseph Zeller in December 1955.

The squadron took in a Yuma rocket detachment from 11 May to 8 June 1956. The majority of the 354th FIS aircraft at this time were F-86D-50s and they were retained until 1957 when F-86Ls began arriving with the unit. The first of the latter was assigned during February 1957, but it was only in mid-August that the final F-86Ls arrived to complete transition. The F-86Ds were in turn flown out to the North American conversion lines, the last leaving on 24 July.

The F-86Ls only took part in one rocket firing deployment: to Vincent AFB from 22 October to 23 November 1957. The squadron meantime had been advised of inactivation, and even before the Vincent deployment a number of Sabres had begun to be reassigned elsewhere. Many went to the 324th FIS and the 456th FIS, and the last flew out of McGhee-Tyson during early December. The 354th FIS was officially inactivated on 8 January 1958.

357TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Assigned to the 316th Air Division and flying F-86Fs out of Nouasseur Air Depot in Morocco, the 357th FIS began to convert onto F-86Ds in May 1955. The entire squadron initially comprised F-86D-36 aircraft, and these arrived by sea via Brookley AFB in Alabama. Meanwhile, the last F-86Fs were relinquished in August of 1955. A few further F-86Ds were assigned later as attrition deliveries, one further F-86D-36 on 20 August 1955 and later on, another D-36, a pair of D-41s and two F-86D-45s were delivered up to May 1959.

Capt Bailey Pendergrass had a lucky escape on 25 June 1956. Called upon to perform an engine test flight on 51-6195, Pendergrass took off from Nouasseur at just after 10 o'clock in the morning. As he passed through 2,000 feet a strong smell of smoke was noticed and the pilot immediately came out of afterburner and started a turn to the left to check for a smoke trail. Pendergrass' attempts to retard the throttle came to nothing however; the lever was

jammed in the forward position. Almost immediately he felt an explosion, followed by illumination of the forward fire warning light and a tailpipe temperature flick to 1,000 degrees C. With only one option left – ejecting – Pendergrass sought to gain altitude, but instead the aircraft nosed over. He ejected safely but experienced problems with seat separation; this in turn resulted in parachute lines fouling his canopy. Fortunately, Pendergrass was an experienced jumpmaster and managed to clear the problem before reaching the ground. He was subsequently taken to the base hospital but only received minor injuries. 51-6195 crashed 5 miles north of the base and was destroyed.

Phase-out of the squadron's F-86Ds was swift – almost all aircraft departed for Chateauroux AB in the last week of February 1960. The 357th FIS was inactivated on 8 March.

Above left, highly-polished F-86D-36 51-8326 bore the name "Maurine VII" on the nose in yellow. Tail markings were black with a white stripe. Serial number was painted red on all squadron aircraft. (Col. Gatschet via Isham) At left, 357th FIS F-86D-35 51-8442 based at Nouasseur AB, French Moroco, in November 1956. (via Norm Taylor) Bottom, 357th F-86D-35 51-8236 was passed on to the Royal Danish AF on 5 August 1960 and lost on 23 September 1961. (via N. Taylor)

Above, F-86L 53-704 is preserved at Travis AFB in accurate 413th FIS markings. Nose, tail and drop tank markings are yellow outlined in black. (Craig Kaston)

413TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Activated at Travis AFB in California on 8 July 1954, the 413th FIS received its first Sabres on 18 December that year. Most of the squadron's complement comprised of F-86D-55 aircraft and the last were delivered in March 1955.

Throughout this time the squadron was assigned to the 28th Air Division, but under Project Arrow all Sabres were transferred to the 82nd FIS on 18 August 1955 and the squadron was inactivated concurrently.

Above, 431st FIS F-86D 52-10054 in original squadron markings of three red chevrons followed by a solid blue chevron. (Col R. Smith via Menard)

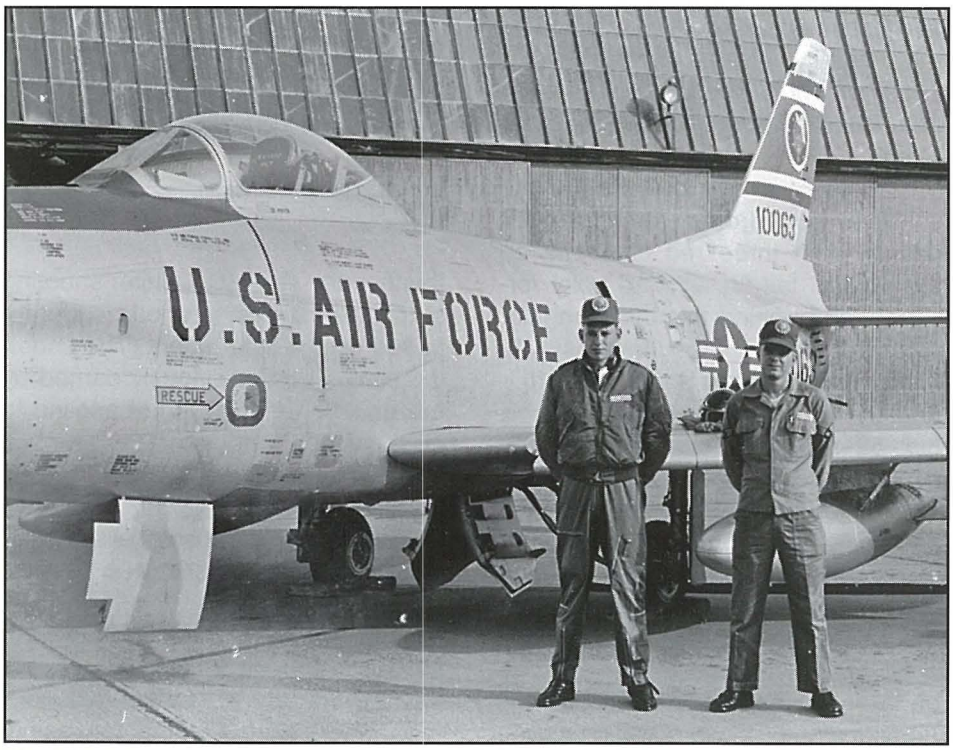
431ST FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

The 431st FIS had flown F-86Fs from Wheelus AB in Libya since July 1953, and the day fighters began to be replaced by F-86Ds early in 1955. The majority of the Dogs were factory-fresh F-86D-50s delivered straight to Brookley AFB in Alabama for overseas transport by ship. The Sabres arrived at St. Nazaire on France's north coast during early December 1954 and were de-preserved and test flown by the resident 7485th Air Depot Wing prior to delivery. The first F-86D, 52-10036, then arrived with the 431st FIS on 9 January 1955 and delivery of the remainder was completed on 28 January. Almost immediately, the squadron lost one of its aircraft in a crash: 52-10106 being destroyed on 18 April 1955. During the time it spent in Libya, the 431st FIS initially came directly under 1603rd ATW control, but transferred to the 7272nd Operations Group on 1 March 1958.

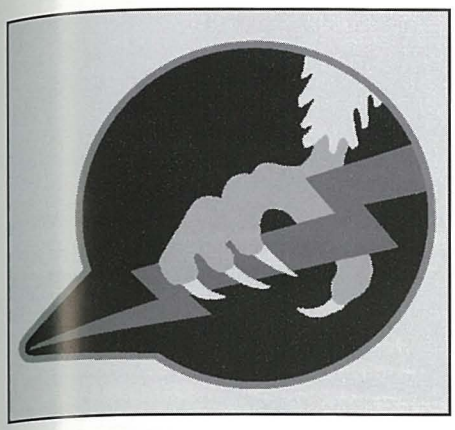
The squadron's aircraft were painted with three red chevrons on the vertical tail fin, aligned point forwards, and behind this the triangular void created by the chevrons was filled in with blue. Some aircraft – notably the squadron commander's s/n 52-10064 – also carried the squadron badge on the mid-fuselage. This scheme was retained for only a short time – in 1956, a more extrovert scheme was applied. This version saw the squadron badge relocated to the tail fin, applied over a broad red band. Bordering this was a white band, outlined in dark blue. Additionally, on each fuselage side a flamboyant red and white shooting star design was applied, superimposed over a blue trident. The shooting star design, previously carried by the unit's F-86Fs, was not applied to all the Dogs, and in any case once the markings were modified in 1957 to incorporate the large "U.S. AIR FORCE" on each fuselage side, the shooting star and trident was deleted.

On 3 September 1958, the squadron moved to Zaragosa AB in Spain, though it remained under 7272nd OG control for the time being.

The 431st FIS was reassigned under USAFE (though attached to the 65th Air Division) on 1 July 1960, and re-equipment with F-102As began in August 1960. All of the F-86Ds were ferried out to Chateauroux AB in France, beginning with 52-3669, 52-10060 and 52-10089 on 23 August; most would see further service with the Yugoslav Air Force. The last Sabre, 52-10009, was ferried to Zaragosa-Chateauroux on 21 October 1960.



At top, the second color scheme used by the 431st was a white comet outlined in red trailing a red flaming tail painted on the fuselage side. A white lightning bolt was applied to the comet's tail and a red trident passed through the comet. The aircraft had a thick red band with the squadron insignia applied to it. The two thin stripes on either side of the red band were dark blue. The wing tanks were tipped in red and had thin white-red-white stripes painted aft of the tip. The serial numbers on the tail had been abbreviated. Instead of 210097 and 210075, 20057 and 2075 were painted on the first two aircraft. (S. Nicolaou collection) Above left, 431st Sabre 52-10070 taxiing. (S. Nicolaou collection) At left, the 431st adopted more sober colors when "U.S. Air Force" was applied to the fuselage side. Tail markings remained the same. (Brig K. Bell via Norm Taylor)



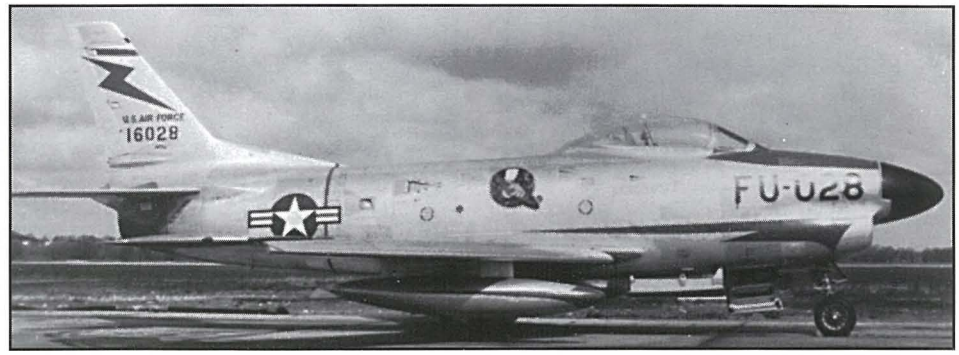
432ND FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Activated at Truax AFB in Wisconsin in December 1952, the 432nd FIS initially flew F-86Fs under the 31st Air Division. On 16 February 1953 the unit transferred to the 520th Air Defense Group control.

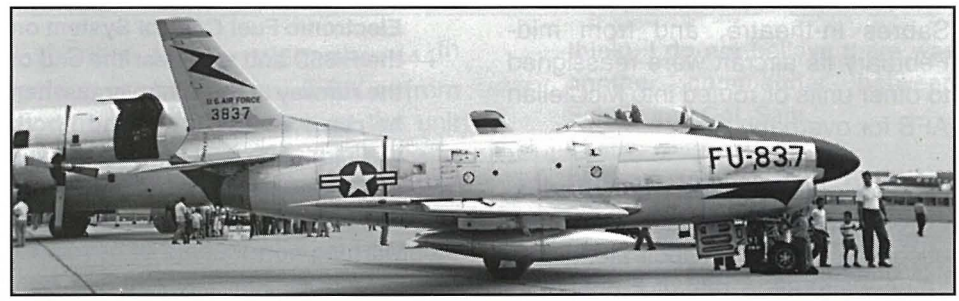
The squadron received its first F-86Ds – three dash-30 models – on 10 June, and by the end of October was fully equipped with a variety of 51-fiscal year Sabre Dogs. Most of the F-86Fs were reassigned to the 18th FIS at Minneapolis.

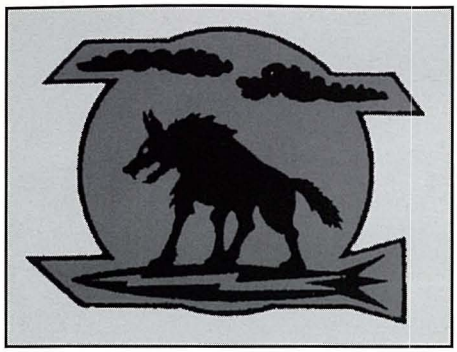
Post-Pull-Out aircraft and F-86D-45s were received starting in early May 1954, and the unmodified squadron aircraft were in turn routed through McClellan AFB for conversion at the same time. By the end of July this process was complete, but the modified aircraft only stayed with the 432nd FIS for a few months. On 14 December 1954, the first of seventeen brand-new F-86D-55s were delivered. These aircraft were followed by a further nine F-86D-60s and by the end of March 1955 the squadron had fully changed-over to the later model Sabres. The old Pull-Out modified aircraft were ferried to Fresno for overhaul while the F-86D-45s passed to other ADC units.

Project Arrow on 18 August 1955 transferred the squadron "on paper" to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, where it took up the F-89D Scorpions based there. At the same time those Sabres still at Truax were passed to the 323rd FIS.



Above, F-86D-30 51-6028 served with the 432nd from June 1953 through June 1954. Pre-Pull-Out aircraft flown by the squadron carried the unit badge on the fuselage side. Nose, tail and wing tank markings were red. (USAF/P. Jackson via Isham) Below, F-86D-60 53-837 was assigned to the 432nd in March 1955. All F-86D-60 aircraft were reassigned to the 323rd in August 1955. (Collect Aire via Isham) Bottom, 432nd F-86D-55s 53-622 and 53-717 in flight in 1955. (Col W. Gatschet via Isham)





440TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Above, when the squadron first arrived in Europe, they applied nose flashes to their aircraft, along with the 86th FIW sunburst on the tail. The 440th chose black and yellow for its color scheme. (via Dave Menard, Isham collection)

Activated at Geiger AFB, Washington, under the 530th Air Defense Group on 18 February 1953, the 440th FIS did not receive its first F-86D until 22 June that year. However the arrival of aircraft swiftly gathered pace and by the end of July the squadron was fully equipped. The 440th FIS deployed to Yuma AFB for one month on 7 February 1954, but this tour was extended until 26 March in order to qualify all pilots in rocket firing. Upon return to Geiger the squadron prepared for deployment overseas. The unit would receive new Sabres in-theatre, and from mid-February its aircraft were reassigned to other units or routed into McClellan AFB for overhaul.

The squadron then deployed to Europe from Alameda aboard the escort carrier USS Tripoli along with its new aircraft, a mix of F-86D-40, -45 and -50 Sabres. The ship sailed through the Panama Canal and delivered the aircraft at St. Nazaire in France where they were de-coccooned and flown out. The 440th FIS officially arrived at its new base, Landstuhl AB in West Germany, on 4 July 1954, having been reassigned to 12th Air Force control on the first of the month. The unit was concurrently attached to the 86th Fighter Bomber Wing for administrative purposes.

On 2 December 1954, the 440th FIS reassigned to the 7486th Air Defense Group control and further to the 86th FIG on 3 January 1956 prior to moving out to a new base at Erding on 17 February 1956.

Joe Watkins was with the 440th FIS when the squadron deployed to Adana in Turkey during June and July 1957. The squadron was tasked with air defense of the base, which was home to the CIA's U-2-equipped "Detachment B", where Francis Gary Powers was a contemporary member. As Joe explains:

" We were told we were there at Adana to protect the U-2 weather recon flights. We all knew what the U-2's were really doing - it was quite an experience. While we were there one of our Lieutenants landed gear-up. I worked on the Electronic Fuel Control System on the F-86D and was near the end of the runway at the runup area when he came in. The tower and I both were trying to tell him his gear was up. After landing he said he couldn't hear us over the [cockpit] warning horn!"

"Adana was a very harsh place. Daytime heat reached 120+° F and at night would drop to 50° F or below. We were there for about 35 days. The U-2s were very protected. They had no markings and would fly out at about 4 am and return late in the evening. You could not see into their hangar and if you even looked in that direction for very long you had a Military Policeman telling you to look the other way."

"It was here that I got an appreciation for the Turkish Military. When we arrived at Adana they had a young Turkish Airman staked out like you would stake a cow, in the middle of the parade field. He had a pup tent and someone would bring him bread and water about twice a day. He was out there for a full week. I don't know why he was there, but he had to be tough to survive."

"The Turkish Airmen would march on the parade field in full uniform at mid-afternoon in the heat. I was watching them one day and as they marched one young man was having a hard time staying in step. The leader stopped the group a couple of times to counsel the young man. After about the third time the leader pulled him out of the ranks, took his rifle and gave it to the next guy to hold and proceeded to beat the young man to the ground. Picked him up, gave him back his rifle and continued the march. The young man was in step the rest of the afternoon."

"We would all go to the Canteen in the evenings to have a few drinks. The main drink they had was called Rocky (I think it was a brandy) and they also had a very strong espresso. I never figured out which was supposed to chase which. Both were hard to drink."

In line with other F-86D units based in Europe, soon after returning from Turkey, the 440th FIS began annual deployments out to Wheelus

AB in Libya for rocket proficiency firing. This began on 14 October 1957. The squadron returned again for a month on 5 August 1958, and deployed again from 4 May to 1 June 1959.

Shortly after returning from the last Wheelus deployment, the 440th FIS began transferring its Sabres to other squadrons within the 86th FIW (which took over from Group as the controlling echelon on 8 March 1958) while others went straight to the Chateauroux depot in France for storage. The last Sabres were flown out in late November 1959. The squadron was inactivated on 1 January 1960.

At top, 52-3900 became the squadron commander's aircraft at about the time that the nose flash was removed. Fuselage bands were dark yellow outlined in black and the vertical tail sunburst was dark yellow and black with a large squadron insignia. (D. Curtis collection) At right, 440th FIS Sabre in 1957, believed to be 51-8412. (S. Nicolaou collection)

444TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Activated on 16 February 1954 at Charleston AFB in South Carolina, the 444th FIS was immediately assigned to the 35th Air Division. The main body of the squadron comprised brand-new F-86D-45 and 50 aircraft, and on 9 October 1955 the squadron flew out to Yuma AFB for a month's rocket firing. A further deployment was made from 5 June to 9July 1956.

On 1 March 1957, the 444th gained a half-dozen F-86Ls from Fresno, and by late August the unit was fully equipped. Meanwhile the F-86Ds were ferried out for conversion, although when the squadron deployed to Vincent AFB on 14 March 1957, a mix of F-86D and L aircraft were taken. This deployment ended on 13 April, and some F-86Ds were flown straight from Vincent AFB to Fresno for modification.

Jim Roquemore arrived with the unit at about this time:

"I reported to the 444th fresh out of Combat Crew Training in the Fall of 1957. The squadron had been in place about 3 years, having begun its Charleston life in tents. When I arrived we had nice ops buildings and an adequate alert hangar.

The squadron commander was Col Sam Wilkerson. His predecessor, a Col. Schulz, had bought the farm (in a T-33 on cross-country, I think). I do not believe there was another commander between Schulz and Col. Sam."

"As we moved into 1958, the squadron was selected to represent ADC in the World Wide Weapons Meet. We thought this made us the best, so we were elated. Then it hit the fan, but good. On 3 February 1958, Lt. John Calvert, who was in training status, flew into a 2-ship formation of F-86s that was flying target for his 90 degree beam attack. Calvert died in the accident; Lt. Ray Bronk ejected safely, and Lt. Del Grumbach landed his bird [53-980] at Charleston, with I was told about 140 holes in it. Del was not injured."

The two aircraft lost were 52-4176 (1stLt Bronk) and 53-861 (1stLt Calvert). John Calvert, flying as call-sign 'Yellow One', had been nearing completion of his Combat Crew Training. Sadly, worse was to follow for the squadron.

At left, 444th aircraft such as this F-86D-45 were received straight from the factory in the fall of 1954. Colors were red and yellow. (USAF/Bill Curry via Isham collection)

"An exercise against B-47s was scheduled. It developed on 4 February [1958]. I flew a profile at about 0800. Lt. Clarence Stewart was leading our flight. I flew 2 more profiles that day. When I reported at 0700 on 5 Feb. I was told that Stewart had hit a B-47 at about midnight. I don't recall whether it was known at that time that he had ejected. He opened his chute at high altitude, and suffered frostbite because he was not wearing gloves. Later conversations with Stewart indicated that he fell behind the beam and was in a tail chase with the 47. He got into its contrail and flew right into its wing and (I recall) engine on the starboard. It had been a long day for him."

The B-47B, one of two 30th Bomber Squadron aircraft flying out of Homestead AFB, had been detailed to drop chaff and then expect intercepts from fighters in the exercise area. Importantly, intercepts were not to be undertaken outside of the exercise area, but this vital piece of information had not been relayed to the fighter squadrons. And just to complicate things, both B-47s were each carrying a Mk 15 nuclear bomb, fitted in the training configuration with no nuclear capsule on board. Following the collision the stricken bomber was able to stay airborne, but was given permission to jettison the bomb. Subsequent searches off the Georgia coast failed to find it, and the lost bomb is still the subject of sporadic press over-reactions up to the present day. The B-47 recovered safely to Hunter AFB in Georgia. Stewart's Sabre was 52-10108 – it crashed near Screven, Georgia, after striking the B-47's right outer engine and wing tank. The 444th FIS's run of bad luck continued, however, as Jim Roquemore recalls:

"On the afternoon of 12 February, Lt. Joseph Sweeney was advised on takeoff by Charleston tower that he was trailing "an unfamiliar flame." He crashed and died near the field boundary. It was determined that his a/b nozzle had malfunctioned." [This aircraft was s/n 53-731]

"Well, guess what! The 444th was no longer the best in the ADC. We stood down for 10 days and an F-89 squadron from up East stood our alert commitment. I was too green to know it, but Col Wilkerson probably was on his way out as our commander."

"On 17 April 58 we departed for our rocketry deployment at Yuma [Vincent AFB, Yuma]. On the way out, on the leg from Memphis to Tinker, Lt. Charles McElroy, who was low on fuel (due to de-icing), bailed at low altitude near Amarillo. Only his feelings were hurt."

1stLt McElroy's aircraft was s/n 53-565; he had hoped to land at Amarillo, but poor weather there made that impossible. Instead, he headed his aircraft toward open country and ejected. McElroy's Sabre hit the ground in a pasture 5 miles southwest of Canyon, TX, and skidded for nearly half-a-mile before coming to a halt. Though a fire broke out in the fuselage, heavy rain prevented it from spreading and firemen from Amarillo managed to extinguish what fires remained. McElroy parachuted into a field close to Canyon and was knocked-out on landing. When he came to, he was soaked, but managed to walk to a nearby house and call Amarillo. He was detained at the base hospital and released the next day. Luckily, for those who made it to Yuma, things went better:

"At Yuma, we followed a squadron that set a record on the range. I believe it was from Sioux City, don't recall squadron #. We set a new record which was immediately broken, as I recall by the Stewart AFB squadron"

The squadron returned from Vincent on 17 May. On 15 November 1958, the 444th FIS was reassigned to the 32nd Air Division control.

By this time the squadron was aware that conversion to the F-101B Voodoo was imminent, and from March 1958 a number of F-86Ls were reassigned to the South Carolina ANG. However, it would not be until late 1959 that the F-101s finally arrived, and on 17 April 1958 the squadron took in another Vincent deployment. In early September 1959 F-86Ls again began to be transferred – this time to the 173rd FIS Nebraska ANG in preparation for the Voodoo.

It was during this phase that the squadron lost its final Sabre in a flying accident: 53-720 crashed on 11 October 1959, taking the life of Capt Harry Haskell. This accident could easily have been avoided, according to Jim Roquemore:

"53-720 was destroyed when Lt. Haskell attempted to land returning from a scramble. Charleston tower reported weather to Harry as "high thin scattered and 10 miles vis." Strangely, the tower never saw him, and the vehicle that was sent to investigate had difficulty

locating the wreckage, although he had crashed on the field near centerline. My private belief is that poor weather information, and Harry's technique, caused this accident."

Some F-86Ls remained with the squadron into 1960, and on 16 March the final Sabre was transferred to the Air National Guard.

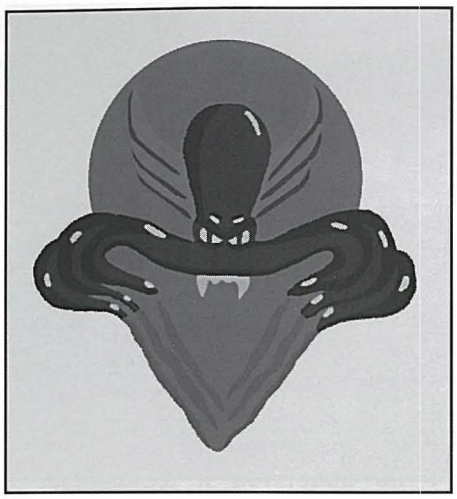
445TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

The 445th FIS activated under the 530th Air Defense Gp at Geiger AFB, WA, on 20 March 1953. One T-33 was assigned to the unit on 9 June 1953, and later in the year F-86Ds were added. At the end of September, the 445th FIS was named top squadron in Western Air Defense Force; its flying time was the highest in the 25th Air Division and its scramble-to-airborne time was the lowest, at four-and-a-half minutes. Additionally, the unit's turn-round time on a mission was the fastest in WADF also, at a mere 12 minutes. Finally, the 445th FIS possessed the highest percentage – 83% - of combat ready crew in Western Air Defense Force.

In November 1954, the 445th FIS went to Yuma County Municipal Airport, Arizona, for annual rocket training. When the firing was over, the unit had broken all existing Air Defense Command records in air-to-air rocketry.

Above, 51-6039 was delivered to the 445th FIS in July 1953, and was still not painted in squadron markings by October 1953. (Don Ratliff via Isham) Bottom, the 445th FIS painted their aircraft in black and white markings. F-86D-35 51-8473 was the personal mount of Capt A.G. Limpantsis and carried the name "Limpy" below the canopy rail. Eagle motif on the fuselage side was later adopted as the 497th squadron insignia. (D. Curtis collection)

The squadron then moved "on paper" to Wurtsmith AFB, MI, and F-89Ds on 18 August 1955 under Project Arrow. F-86Ds at Geiger were transferred to the 497th FIS.



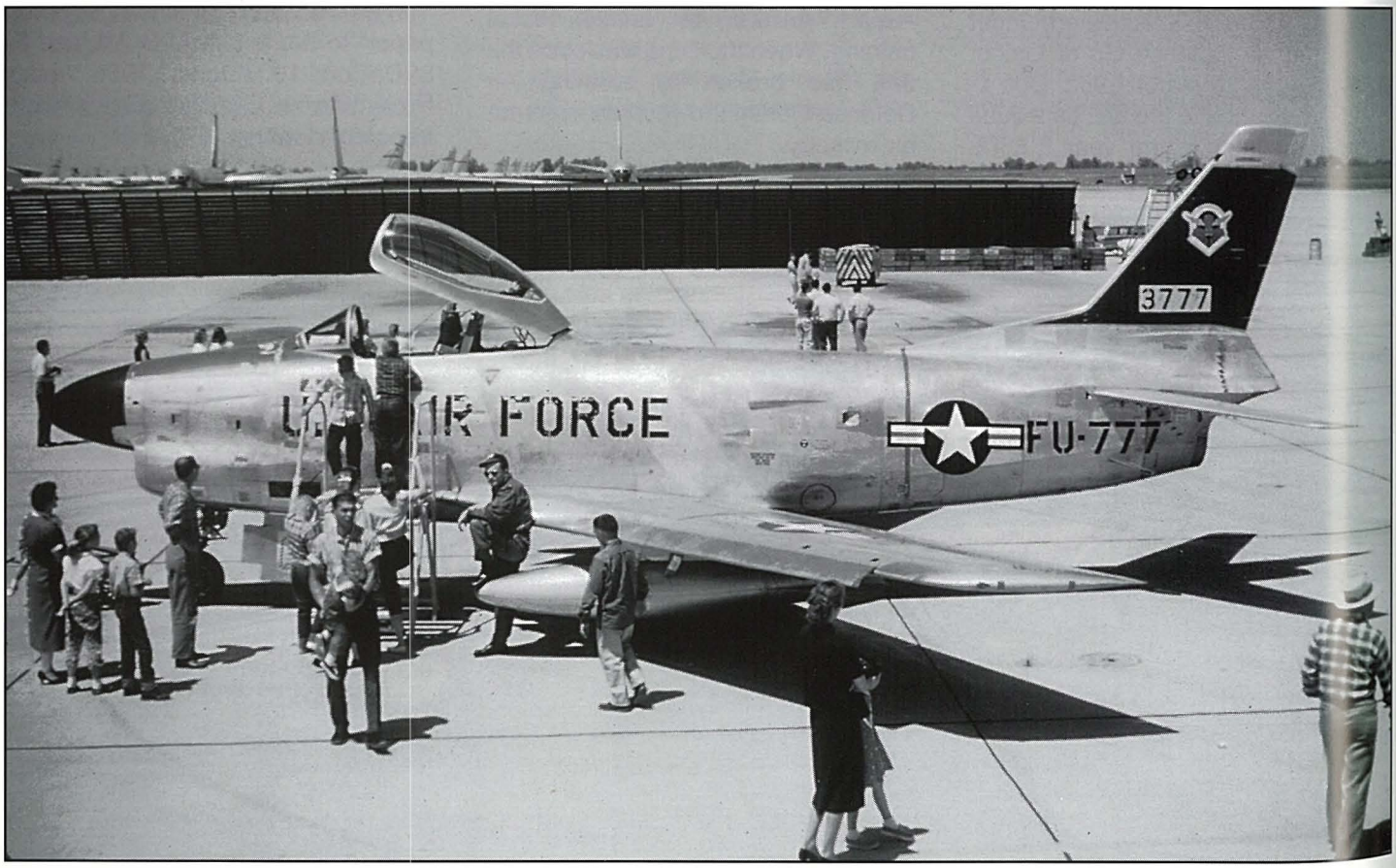
Above, F-86D-31 had blue trim outlined in yellow. The serial number 51-5996 was painted in black and almost invisible. (Brig K.W. Bell via Isham) Bottom, the 456th dropped the forward fuselage flash when it converted to the F-86L. 777 was assigned to the unit for only six months, from November 1957 to May 1958. (Brig K.W. Bell via Isham)

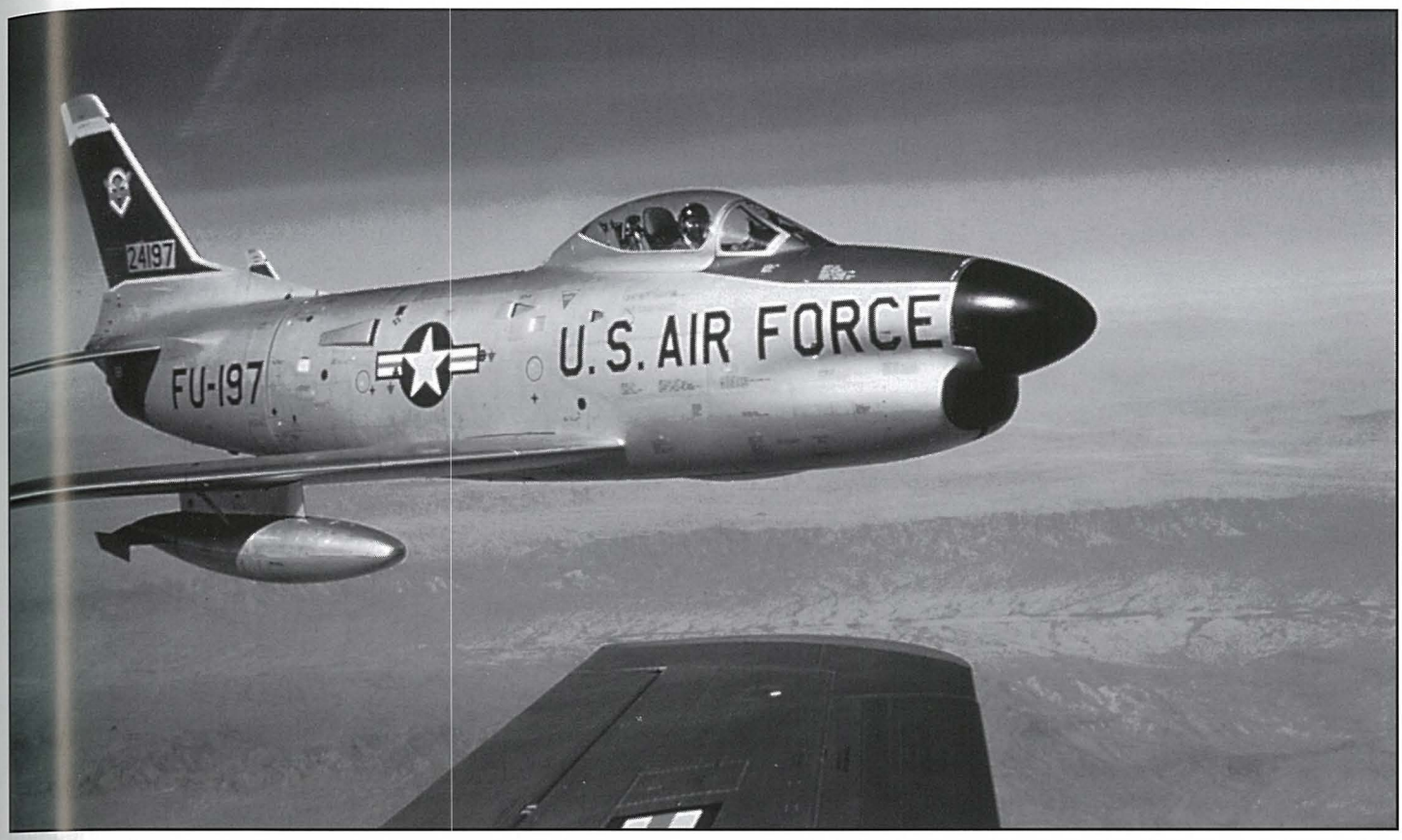
456TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Activated on 8 August 1954, at George AFB, in California, the 456th FIS was assigned to the 520th Air Defense Group. On 28 August, the squadron received its first Sabre, a post-Pull-Out F-86D-31, and by the end of October was fully equipped with aircraft of the same model. In January 1955, a few F-86D-36s were also added to squadron strength, but from 27 May brand-new F-86D-60s began to arrive with the 456th FIS.

The conversion process was slow, and when Project Arrow came into play on 18 August 1955, only eleven new aircraft had been actually received. On the same date, all 456th FIS assets were transferred to the 325th FIS at Truax AFB in Wisconsin and the 456th FIS tag was inactivated.

However, this situation was short-lived for on 18 October 1955, the 456th FIS was again reactivated with F-86Ds, this time at Castle AFB in California. The squadron was assigned to 28th Air Division control.





Above, 456th FIS F-86L-46 52-4197 in flight from Castle AFB, CA, in 1958. Tail was painted dark blue and was outlined in yellow. Sabre Dogs had an olive drab anti-glare panel. (Brig K. W. Bell via Isham)

F-86Ls replaced the Ds from late August 1957, and by mid-November the handover was largely complete.

In May 1958, the 456th FIS began to receive F-102As and the squadron's F-86L aircraft were flown out, mainly to the 187th FIS Wyoming Air National Guard at Cheyenne. The unit's last Sabre was flown out in mid-July 1958.

460TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

The 460th FIS was activated on 18 March 1954 at McGhee-Tyson AFB, TN, with F-86Ds and assigned to the 516th Air Defense Group. The first aircraft – six F-86D-45s – arrived on 15 June, followed by sixteen F-86D-50s in August.

The unit was commanded by Major Rhodes Elam and they began to pull alert duty on 1 October 1954. The 460th FIS alert commitment was rotated days with the 469th FIS also at McGhee-Tyson; both units were tasked with protecting the Oak Ridge atomic energy development site. The squadron experienced some upheaval during October with the transfer of six F-86D-45s to the 444th FIS, so that the latter could standardise on this version. The 460th FIS got the bad part of the deal: the 444th FIS transferred six F-86D-40s into the unit, which gave the 460th an unenviable mix of aircraft, some with drag 'chutes and some without. The situation was finally resolved in late November with the arrival of eight F-86D-50s straight from the factory. The F-86D-40s were all flown out to Fresno in early 1955.

Briefly standardized on 24 F-86D-50s, six aircraft were transferred to McClellan AFB on 29 April 1955 and replaced with a like number of F-86D-21s. The squadron had meantime deployed to Yuma for rocket firing on 23 April and the replacements arrived there. The unit returned to McGhee-Tyson on 20 May 1955.

On 18 August 1955 the unit number was transferred "on paper" to Portland AFB in Oregon. Those Sabres and personnel at McGhee-Tyson were transferred concurrently to the 354th FIS.

Motto: Cave Tigrim (Beware of the Tiger).

465TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Activated on 18 February 1953 at McChord AFB in Washington State, the 465th FIS was concurrently assigned to 567th Air Defense Group alongside 317th FIS. The squadron's F-86Ds were not received until early June, however, and it was not until October that the final machines arrived at McChord. Most of these were D-20 models delivered from storage at Norton AFB and D-30s straight from NAA.

The squadron took in its first Yuma deployment from 28 July to 27 August 1954 and soon after began conversion to post Pull-Out aircraft. The "new" aircraft, a mix of modified 51-fiscal year models were delivered up to the end of December 1954 with F-86D-21s coming from McClellan AFB and all later marks from the NAA Fresno line. A number of these were then replaced by McClellan-modified F-86D-36s in January and February 1955 and the F-86D-21s were returned to McClellan whilst the later models were reassigned to 317th FIS on site.

Finally, in May 1955 the squadron fully re-equipped with brand-new F-86D-60s and the last conversion was completed with the arrival of 53-1059 on 25 July. Despite the high number of Sabres that had transited through the unit, 465th FIS lost only two during this period: 51-6178 on 1 April 1955 and 53-974 on 29 June 1955, the latter only three weeks after delivery.

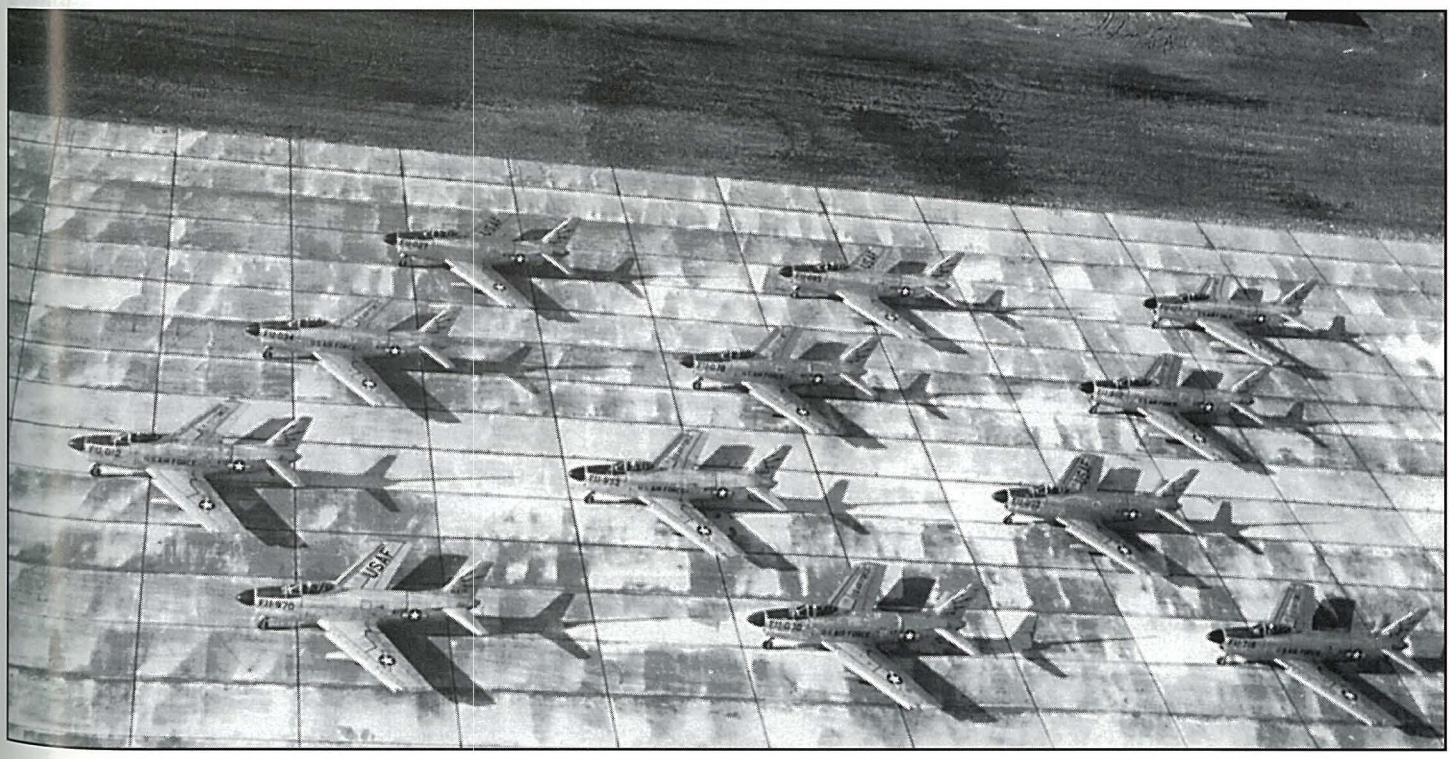
On 18 August 1955, the 465th FIS was inactivated under Project Arrow and all assets were transferred to the 318th FIS at McChord.

The 465th was reactivated in October 1955 and operated F-89Ds out of Griffiss AFB in New York state. On 1 July 1959, the unit designation was transferred to Hanscom AFB in Massachussetts where it took over F-86Ls previously flown by the 49th FIS. At the same time the 465th FIS was reassigned to Boston Air Defense Sector control.

The squadron's new period of Sabre operation was short-lived, however. From late September 1959 until mid-November, 465th FIS transferred a number of F-86Ls to 173rd FIS Nebraska ANG. Into early 1960 the squadron ran at half-strength before ferrying its last Sabres out to Davis-Monthan during February and early March. The 465th FIS was inactivated on 15 March 1960.

Above, 51-3078 was one of the 465th FIS's first aircraft. It was assigned on 28 July 1953 and took part in the squadron's 1954 Yuma rocket firing deployment. Shortly after returning to McChord, on 12 December, the aircraft was lost in a flying accident. Pilot's helmet is yellow with red lightning bolts, matching the tail fin design. (K. Lotz via Isham) Below, 465th F-86D-30 51-5988 at McChord AFB, WA, in 1953. Note special boarding ladder used by crews to gain access to the cockpit. (USAF via Norm Taylor)

Above, despite carrying similar buzz numbers, these Sabres are from different production blocks. FU-953 is a D-30, while FU-996 is a D-20. (USAF) At right, minus drop tanks, these 465th Sabres await another rocket firing mission from Yuma in 1954. (K. Lotz via Isham) Bottom, 12-ship "maximum effort" mission starts rolling in October 1953. 50-716 (bottom row, far right) was one of only a few F-86D-15s assigned to front-line units. (USAF)



Above, this 465th FIS Sabre had been in service less than six months when this photo was taken, hence its bright natural metal finish. Noteworthy is the factory-applied "US AIR FORCE" script, which was rounded, rather than square as applied by the USAF depots. (USAF) At left, 51-2980 sucks up its gear on take-off from McChord AFB. (USAF) Bottom, when the 465th transferred to Hanscom AFB in 1959, the squadron's new aircraft were ex-49th FIS Sabres such as 52-4303 photographed at the time of handover. Aircraft had da-glo nose, outer wing panels, and rear fuselage stripe with a green tail band outlined in black. The aircraft still wears the 49th insignia, which was removed shortly after turnover. (John J. Carter)

Above, 469th FIS squadron commanders aircraft 51-8500 in June 1956. The tail is decorated in red and white checkerboards and the fuselage and wing tips have four red stripes outlined in white to denote CO's aircraft. (LtCol Sands via Isham) Below, the first F-86Ds assigned to the 469th wore red lightning flashes outlined in white. The unit badge was painted on the forward fuselage and the buzz was repositioned to the mid-fuselage. (D. Curtis collection)

469TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Based at McGhee-Tyson AFB in TN, the 469th FIS had flown F-86As from May 1953 in defense of the nearby Alcoa aluminum plant, the Oakridge atomic research facility and the Tennessee dams. Col John L. Elder, Jr., led the squadron, under the 516th Air Defense Group control until 1 February 1954 when he was posted to Iceland. In his place, LtCol Walter Modessitt became the 469th FIS squadron commander and on 15 February the first of 22 brand-new F-86D-40s arrived at McGhee-Tyson.

Unit markings consisted of a red lightning flash on the tail fin outlined in white, with a red nose flash also outlined in white.

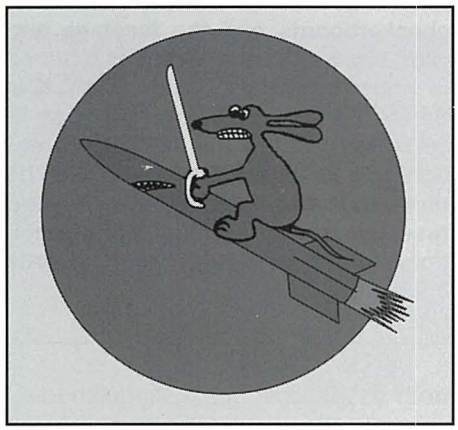
The entire squadron was re-equipped by the end of February 1954, and the old F-86As were ferried out for overhaul and service with ANG units. The last F-86A, 49-1027, departed on 15 July, bound for 197th FIS Arizona ANG. During April 1955 the old F-86D-40s were ferried-out to McClellan AFB and exchanged for newly-modified F-86D-36s. Shortly afterwards, on 2 May, Maj Edward Heckman took over command of the squadron.

On 18 August 1955, the 516th ADG was redesignated the 355th Fighter Group and the 469th FIS was assigned under this Group, along with the 354th FIS (redesignated from 460th FIS on the same day). Squadron markings changed concurrently, and this time consisted of checkerboard tail markings for both squadrons, red and white for 469th.

The 469th FIS possessed a generally good accident record, but one sad exception occurred on 13 June 1956. Lt George Fuerbach's Sabre caught fire on takeoff and although the pilot managed to stop his machine beside the runway, the fire took hold quickly. Incredibly, Fuerbach ejected from the Sabre at this point, and inevitably for a zero altitude ejection, he failed to separate from his seat. When he was found, it was thought that he had only broken his leg. Unfortunately, Fuerbach's internal injuries were massive and he died five days later.

Better news was to follow on 1 August 1957: the entire group and its assigned squadrons received the ADC 'A' Award. The 355th FG became the first ADC Group to have both squadrons thus distinguished.

On 9 October, the Group's alert commitment ceased and on the following day the base was inactivated and transferred to Air National Guard control. A number of 469th FIS Sabres were then transferred to the 155th FIS Tennessee ANG and the unit was finally inactivated on 1 December 1957.



At top, at Boston's Logan Airport on 14 July 1957, 51-8503 shows the 355th FG insignia below the windscreen. Drop tank bands were blue for blue flight. (via Norm Taylor) Above, F-86D-45 52-3944 in early 496th USAFE markings of yellow and black. Note black wing tips followed by a wide yellow band outlined in black. (via Larry Davis, Isham collection)

496TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

In March 1953, the 496th FIS was activated at Hamilton AFB in California with a handful of F-51 Mustangs. Assigned to the 566th Air Defense Group, the squadron then began to receive new F-86D-20 through -40 aircraft beginning on 8 July 1953 with the last deliveries occurring in November. Just prior to this, on 23 October, the unit lost its first Sabre, 51-6113, after an in-flight fire near Black Point, CA. Another crash wrote-off 51-6172 on 30 November following another in-flight fire.

In early 1954 the squadron was informed of a Permanent Change of Station to USAF Europe and starting on 8 February a number of Sabres were shipped out to Fresno and McClellan for overhaul. The 496th FIS would pick up new Sabres in California prior to departing for Europe by sea. Despite this, from 8 March to 6 April, the 496th FIS took part in a month-long Yuma rocket firing deployment and upon return to Hamilton began disposing of its aircraft. These again went to Fresno and McClellan aside from a few that were reassigned to the 465th FIS at McChord AFB.

The squadron departed Alameda in June 1954 aboard USS Tripoli with its new F-86D-45 aircraft, tightly packed on the flight deck along with those of the 440th FIS. They were reassigned to the 12th Air Force on 1 July and concurrently attached to 86th FBW. The 496th FIS moved into its new base at Landstuhl AB in West Germany a few days later. The aircraft were put ashore at St Nazaire in France from where the de-cocooned Sabres were then flown in to Landstuhl. The squadron was moved under the 7486th Air Defense Group umbrella on 2 December 1954.

The 469th FIS suffered a tragic accident on the night of 26 June 1955 when 52-3933 collided in the air over Germany with a Royal Air Force Avro Lincoln bomber. The unidentified Sabre pilot and five crew of the Lincoln were killed in the accident which occurred 7 miles north-west of Bitburg.

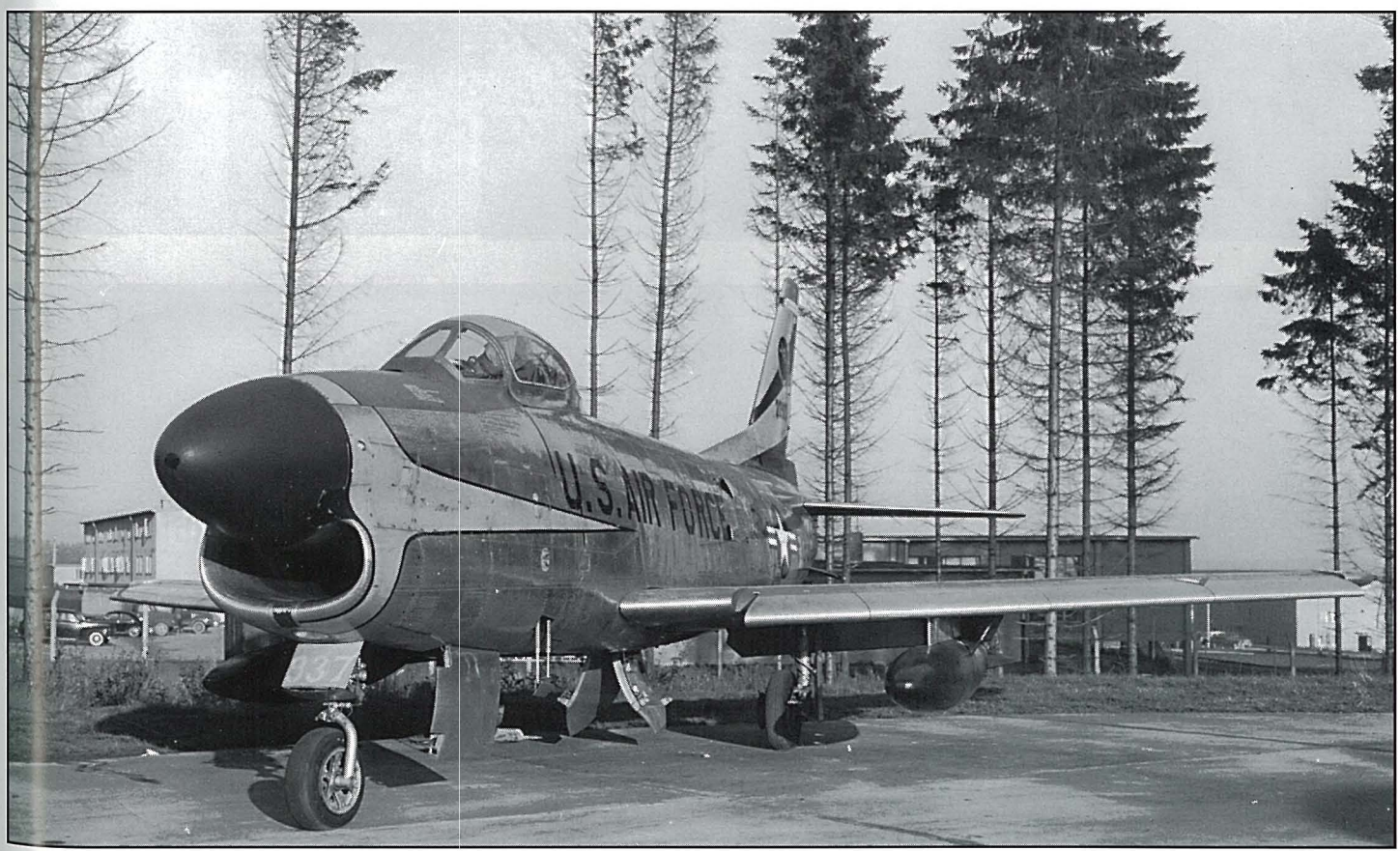
On 3 January 1956, the unit was permanently assigned to the 86th Fighter Interceptor Group and on 8 November 1956, 496th moved into its

new home at Hahn AB. A number of Wheelus AB rocket firing deployments then took place starting in August 1957 with a further month-long stint in July 1958. The squadron's engineering test pilot at the time was one Thomas P. Stafford, who was bound for greater things. Soon after leaving the 496th FIS in 1958, Stafford went to school at Edwards AFB to become a test pilot. In the early 'sixties he was picked-up by NASA for its astronaut programme and Tom Stafford flew two Gemini space missions as well as commanding Apollo 10, the final rehearsal mission for the historic moon landing.

During 1959, the 496th FIS began to receive F-102A Delta Daggers – the second squadron in Europe to do so – and from mid-July the Sabres were reassigned. Most went to the storage depot at Chateauroux in France although a few were taken over by other units within the 86th FIW, notably the 513th FIS. The last 496th FIS F-86Ds were flown out in December 1959.

The squadron's motto was 'Cave Canem' (Beware of the Dog).

At top, F-86D-45 52-3940 wears an unusual "ying and yang" design on the drop tank in yellow and black. (J. H. Elliott) Above, 52-3927 in flight without drop tanks. (via Kaston) Below, by 1956, the 496th yellow and black markings included a nose scallop and yellow and black starburst tail design. (Lionel Paul collection)



497TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

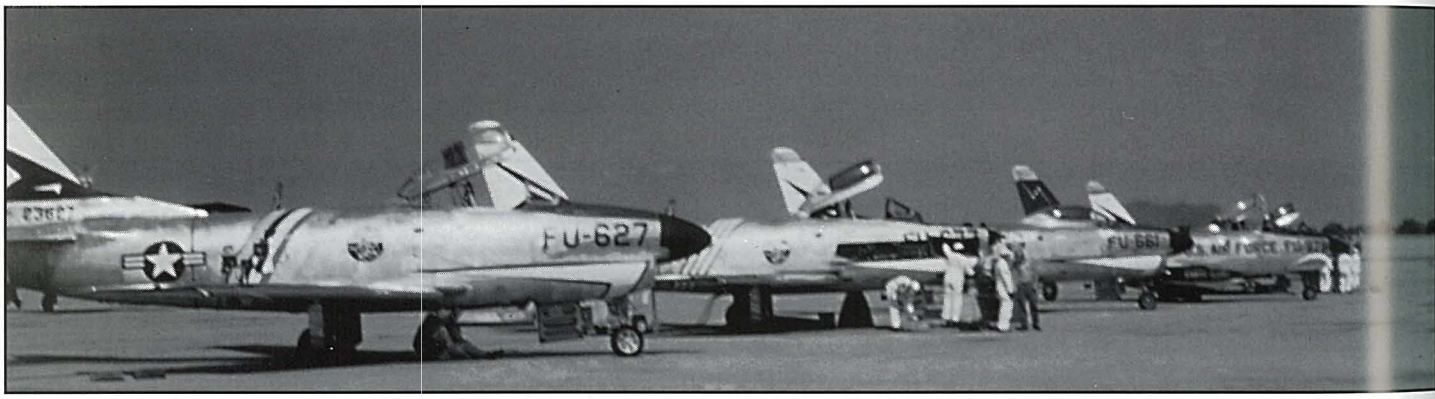
Under Project Arrow, on 18 August 1955, the 445th FIS at Geiger AFB in Washington state was renumbered as the 497th FIS. The latter had previously flown F-89D Scorpions from Portland International Airport, Oregon. Taking over the F-86D-41s of the 445th FIS, the squadron now came under 84th FG control.

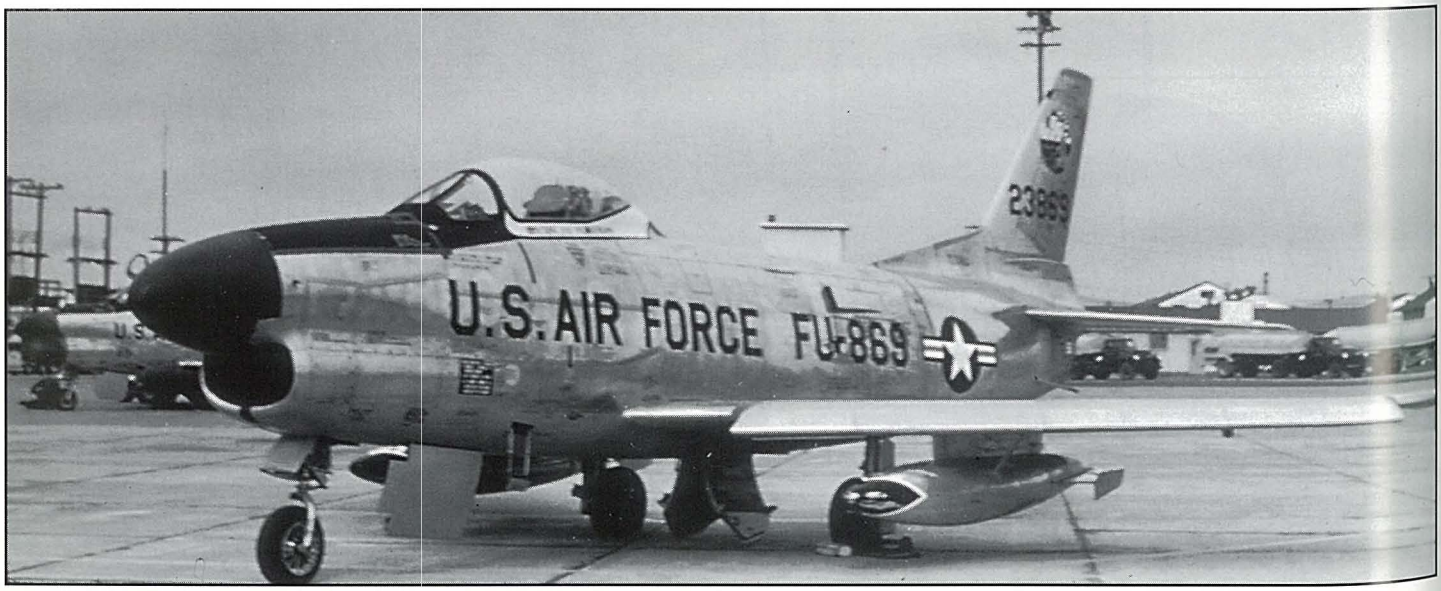
The 497th FIS deployed to Yuma AFB for rocket firing from 18 February to 17 March 1956 and returned to the re-named Vincent AFB in November 1957. However, the squadron was then slated for a move overseas and a number of Sabres were reassigned with others being flown in to fill the holes. At the end of March 1958, the squadron's aircraft were flown to Brookley AFB in Alabama and prepared for overseas movement by ship. The process of moving the whole squadron overseas took some time to accomplish. The Sabres arrived at the new base at Torrejon AB in Spain during the first days of May, and were assigned to the resident 3970th Air Base Group, for depreservation. The squadrons move was not made official until 21 July 1958. Prior to this, on 5 July, the 497th FIS was reassigned to the 65th Air Division.

During the unit's time in Spain, the Sabres were routed through FIAT in Turin, Italy, for overhaul and from early 1959 all received the "sugar scoop" side intakes seen on many USAFE Dogs. The 497th FIS also lost a number of Sabres in accidents: 52-3599 on 18 January 1960, and 52-3603 on 4 May 1960 for example.

Re-equipment with F-102A Delta Daggers began in 1960, and all the Sabres were ferried out to Chateauroux AB in France. The last F-86Ds left Torrejon in May 1960.

Below, black and white tails and nose flashes were worn by stateside 497th Sabres. Seen at Yuma in February 1956, 53-3627 has red-white-black-yellow fuselage stripes (fore to aft). (Col C. W. King via Isham) Bottom, 52-3869 at Zaragosa AB in Spain had a white canopy rail outlined in black and the unit's insignia on the tail. Flight colors were worn on the drop tanks, in this case blue. (D. Ratliff via Isham)





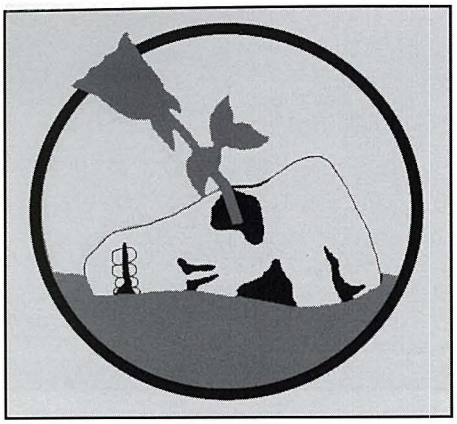
498TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Activated as part of Project Arrow on 18 August 1955, the 498th FIS took over men and materiel of the inactivated 520th FIS "Geiger Tigers". The squadron's base remained at Geiger and the new unit was assigned to the 84th Fighter Group control alongside the 497th FIS.

The squadron's aircraft were F-86D-60s and the 498th FIS immediately set about continuing the Geiger Tigers' reputation for excellence. The unit undertook its first Yuma deployment from 25 October to 23 November 1955 and returned in June 1956. During the latter deployment, the squadron lost its only Sabre 53-986, on 12 June.

During mid-1956, the 498th FIS began to receive F-102As and from 28 April, the Sabres were gradually ferried out for F-86L conversion. Conversion was slow, however, and the last F-86Ds flew out of Geiger on 25 January 1957.

At top, F-86D-60 taxis out of its alert barn. 498th aircraft had blue and white trim on their drop tanks, canopy frames, and tail as well as a red and white sharkmouth outlined in blue. (K. Lotz via Isham) At right, 53-4059 was the mount of Brig Gen Sam Agee, 9th AD CO. His aircraft had a natural metal star on a blue nose gear door. The fuselage stripes were yellow-blue-white-red. (K. Lotz via Isham) Below, "King's Queen" (in red) was the mount of Lt King Lotz in June 1956. A Tiger head insignia is on the tail fin. (K. Lotz via Isham)



509TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

One of the lesser-known F-86D units, the 509th FIS was activated as part of the 405th Fighter Wing on 9 April 1959 at Luzon, Philippines. The squadron took over all F-86D-40, -45 and -50 aircraft previously operated by the 26th FIS. The squadron was commanded by Major Raymond H. Eckert.

Sam Ballard was in the squadron during its brief life and recalls its only Sabre accident:

"We lost one F-86D while I was there – and not a fault of the plane. It crashed on take-off when it ran out of fuel. The pilot ejected but the plane was a total loss – many red faces!"

Most of these aircraft remained for less than a year and during early 1960, the unit's first F-102As began to arrive. However, Sam Ballard confirms that the F-86Ds remained on the alert pad until squadron pilots were up-to-speed on the Delta Dagger. The first Sabres were ferried out in January, and most went to overhaul at Komaki in Japan. The 509th FIS lost its last F-86D in late August of 1960. It was assigned directly to the Military Assistance Program.

512TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

On 8 September 1955, the 512th FIS, flying F-86F Sabres at Soesterberg AB in Holland, moved "less personnel and equipment" to RAF Bentwaters, England. The Dutch unit was re-numbered the 32nd Fighter Day Squadron. While at Bentwaters the 512th FIS took over the F-86Ds previously assigned to the 87th FIS. The latter squadron was inactivated on the same day.

However, all personnel were retained at Bentwaters and LtCol Mike Quirk continued as Commanding Officer. The squadron badge design was retained from the 87th FIS as well as the motto "Vigilare Pro Pace" (On Guard for Peace).

In December 1955 the squadron nearly suffered its first accident with the 'Dog'. Chuck Metz:

Above, 52-4185 at Duxford in September 1957 with "sugar scoop" mid-fuselage cooling intakes and buzz number repositioned on the aft fuselage. Tail stripes were, top-to-bottom, blue-yellow-red outlined in black. The fuselage flash, canopy frame and flight commander's band were yellow outlined in black. (Jack Friell)

"We [the 512th] had one aircraft that kept flaming out for no reason. The '86D just can't do that, it is physically impossible, but this one did." [The electronic fuel control system fitted to the F-86D meant that extremely rapid response to throttle settings was possible. Additionally, according to the F-86D Flight Handbook: "Flame outs and compressor stalls due to excessively rapid throttle movements are eliminated because the controls will always respond at the correct rate, regardless of how fast the throttle is moved."]

"It caused a lot of problems for us over a year, but no one ever got hurt. Well, Charley Kapsa was out over the North Sea one night, and it did its thing. It was decided that a landing at Manston was the best thing since it was one of those wide, long crash strips. What Charley didn't know was that the runway was under construction on one side. Of course, he landed on that side because he couldn't see in the dark before it was too late. After all, when the engine isn't running, you get committed and you land. No one could ever figure out how he landed in the 8-foot-deep stretch of hole that was full of construction equipment, and didn't hit a thing! The real problem was how to remove the ship from the hole."

During 1956 LtCol John J. Ruettgers took over command of the

512th and Mike Quirk was rotated back to the USA.

The 87th FIS had conducted rocket firing at Wheelus AB in Libya during August 1955, so that when the 512th FIS flew out again on 2 March 1956 the squadron's pilots were well-practiced. During the month's rocket firing they broke the USAFE record of hits on the target – raising it to one hundred and thirty-four. But the European Sabre squadrons were learning fast and the record stood for less than a month. However, the 512th FIS had the last laugh; in 1957 they would raise the record again.

On 26 April 1957, the 512th FIS again flew out to Libya and broke the USAFE record. The 512th's top scorers were: LtCol Ruettgers, Lt John Garnish, Lt Ken Whittemore, Lt Charles Metz and Lt Dave Johnson. On his first pass, Lt. Francis shot the target banner clean off its cable, while his squadron commander repeated the feat to score hit number 365. In so doing he beat the 513th FIS's existing record set in March by 28 hits. In recognition of its achievements, the 512th FIS was awarded the prestigious Hughes Trophy, which was presented to LtCol Ruettgers at a banquet held in Washington on July 29. The Trophy was awarded annually by the Hughes Aircraft Company to the top fighter squadron nominated by HQ USAF.

From January 1957, the 512th FIS had been operating from nearby RAF Woodbridge as the runways and taxiways at Bentwaters were ripped up and re-laid. This process took more than a year to complete and the 512th never returned to Bentwaters. With the impending inactivation of the 406th FIW, the UK-based Sabre squadrons were split up; the 512th was slated for a move from Bentwaters to Sembach in West Germany. The late Pete Hutting was John Ruettgers' crew chief and recalled that the allocation of the 406th's squadrons to the new bases was carried out in a far from scientific manner:

"Some time in late 1957 or early 1958, Colonel Ruettgers flew in '110 [F-86D 52-10110, his personal aircraft] to Manston, to find out where the 512th was to go. I can remember him getting back to Woodbridge, where we were because of the runway being closed at Bentwaters, and being met by several officers. He told us we were going to Sembach, the 514th were going to Ramstein, and after the toss of a coin, the 513th were to go to Phalsbourg in France. I think he was quite pleased with himself that he had won the toss."

The squadron moved to Sembach AB on 24 March 1958 and was assigned to the 86th FIW. Almost immediately, the 512th FIS found itself on TDY, firstly to Wheelus AB between 26 May and 23 June 1958, and then to Adana AB, Turkey, on 16 July to cover the crisis in Lebanon. John Ruettgers was on holiday in Elba at the time, but managed to join his squadron in Turkey by catching a boat to the coast, a train back to Sembach, and finally flying out to meet the rest of the 512th in a T-33. The squadron returned to Germany in November 1958. During this crisis a small core of aircraft and personnel had remained at Sembach to stand alert.

Just over six months later on 1 July 1959, the 512th FIS was inactivated. The last two F-86Ds departed Sembach for Chateauroux on 10 June and squadron personnel were largely transferred to the 7127th Support Group at Sembach.

Below, 52-10045 en route to Wheelus AB for a rocket firing deployment. The 512th received this Sabre from the 87th FIS and wears the same basic scheme. (Peter Hutting)

513TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Based at RAF Manston on the south-east tip of England, the 513th FIS came under 406th FIW control and operated F-86Fs until late 1954. On 4 October, three F-86D-45s arrived at Manston for the 513th FIS and its sister squadron the 514th to begin conversion. Both squadrons were largely re-equipped by the end of November, although the first operational mission was not flown until 3 December, squadron Operations Officer Maj. Larry Blesie completing this sortie. The F-86Fs were flown out to Scottish Aviation at Prestwick and overhauled before returning to the United States.

On 4 April 1956, the 513th FIS deployed to Libya for live rocket firing; the squadron had previously fired only in the Thames estuary. It was during the April deployment that 'B' Flight leader 1stLt John C. Hutson made a name for himself as a sharpshooter, and in doing so, helped his squadron break the USAFE record for assessed hits. Firing at targets towed by TB-29 bombers, squadron pilots racked up 201 hits, breaking the 512th FIS record set the previous month.

In July 1956, the 406th FIW won the rocketry phase of the annual Fighter Weapons Meet contest held at Wheelus for USAFE F-86D units. Wing pilots scored 11,000 points (against the 10,800 points of its nearest rival) and again John Hutson of the 513th FIS was the highest individual scorer with 5,000 points. By winning this competition, the 406th FIW won the right to represent USAFE at the Air Force Rocketry Meet at Yuma AFB in October. Though it won no prizes in the latter, it was a great achievement to be labelled "Best in USAFE".

Above, when it first received F-86Ds, the 513th painted the canopy frames red. The slanted blue-yellow-red tail stripes were carried over from the F-86Fs and applied to all 406th FIW Sabres. 52-4077 was the mount of 1stLt G. J. Nader. (Bob Brinker) Below, in late 1955, all 406th FIW Sabres were re-painted to incorporate the "harpoon" design pioneered by the 512th FIS and the tail stripes were realigned horizontally and the squadron insignia was added. 52-4063 was red trimmed and assigned to 1stLt Gerry Nader. (Gerry Nader)

The squadron's first F-86D loss occurred in late 1956. Thankfully, it was non-fatal. 1stLt Robert "Zeb" Zbornak parted company with his Sabre, 52-4216, near the village of Tille in France. This is how Zeb remembers it:

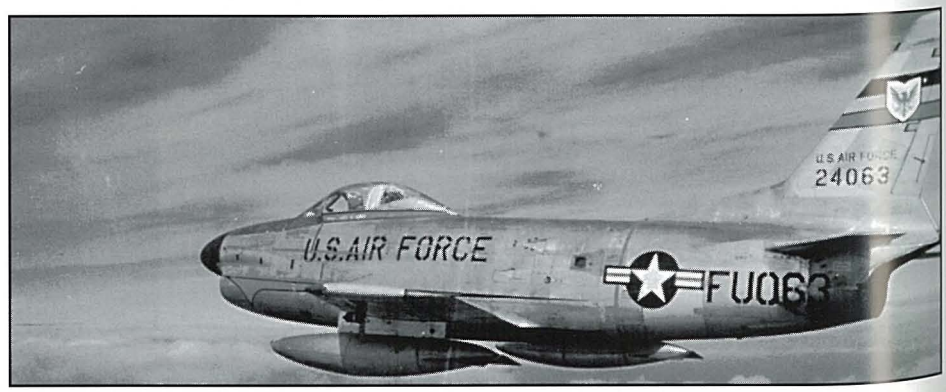
"On November 1, 1956, I ejected from an F-86D over France on a night flight out of Manston. In October 1956, I [had] received orders to transfer mid-November to an F-100 Wing at Peru, Indiana. On November 1, I was attempting to acquire the minimum flying time for pay purposes (The USAF required four hours flying time minimum, to pay Flying Pay for any month). I flew one sortie during the day. At dusk that evening, I took off in a flight of three F-86Ds for a night mission. I was to fly as 'target' for the other two fighters to practice 90-degree intercept passes - controlled by ground radar. To make a long story short, there were mitigating circumstances which led up to my ejecting from the aircraft:

1. Weather was to clear up by landing time; instead, it deteriorated to heavy rain squalls and there was a jetstream at altitude.

2. GCA lost aircraft blips in the heavy rain, forcing them to come around again, taking up valuable time.

3. North Foreland Radio Station, our only navigational aid, started failing at intervals, giving false station passage signals.

4. I had the highest altitude so I was the last aircraft to descend, remaining at altitude



until minimum fuel was indicated.

5. The jetstream blew my aircraft considerably south of the normal descending turn to low altitude.

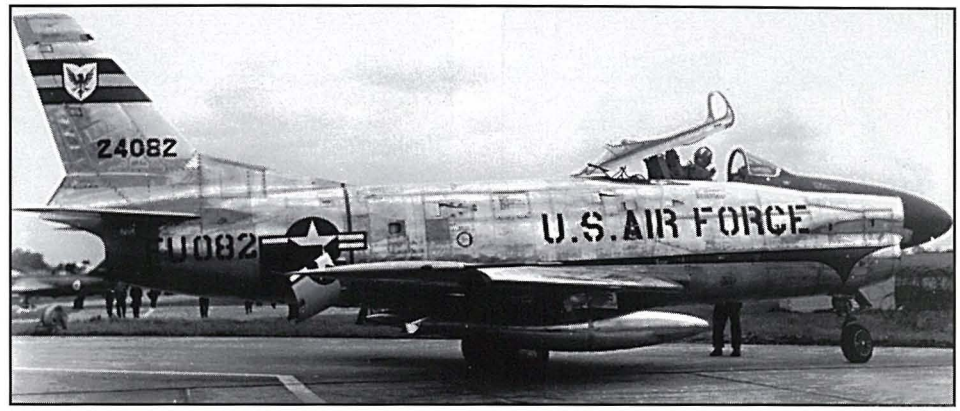
6. As I started my descending penetration turn, an alternator failed, temporarily locking up the hydraulic flight controls as well as the flight instruments.

7. GCA picked up another aircraft, an SA-16 returning from Holland, thought it was me and directed me accordingly."

"My fuel level became critical at low altitude, forcing me to climb to altitude and call Mayday. I was gliding toward Laon, France, following steering directions from their tower when my engine flamed out. I ejected and my aircraft landed in a field and slid into a hedgerow. The fuselage sheared from the wing."

The next annual trip to Wheelus AB took place in February and March 1957, and the deployment phase marked the squadron's next aircraft accidents. Again no fatalities were incurred, but both Sabres were lost.

Departing Manston in pairs on 27 February, the squadron routed south to Marignane Airport, near Marseilles on the southern coast of France. John Hutson, flying in 52-10056, was the flight leader with 1stLt Bob Platenburg in 52-4245 flying his wing. The pair arrived in France around lunchtime, and waited for their aircraft to be fuelled. On the leg to Rome later that afternoon the weather closed in rapidly, and with failing radios and unreliable ground steering information the pair were forced to eject over Sicily.



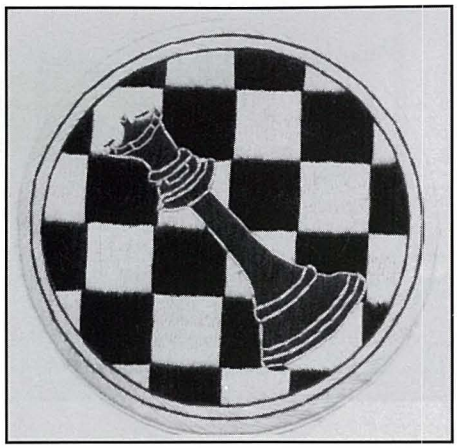
Platenburg sustained a back injury, but was otherwise uninjured and his Sabre was last seen heading out to sea. Hutson was unhurt; his "Dog" came down on a hillside near Castellamare. Both pilots were picked up by locals and then joined the squadron in Libya.

The detachment to Wheelus fortunately ran without further hitch, and when the 513th FIS returned to Manston on 30 March, they had broken the previous record by scoring 337 hits on the targets (comprising 177 actual hits and 160 assessed hits) after 84 hours and 39 minutes on the range. The squadron's high scorers were 1stLts Ramon 'Ray' Medina and, again, John Hutson. Sadly, though the 1957 Rocketry Meet was again held in the United States, pilots from the USAFE team were selected from the highest hitters on the Continent, and none was chosen from the 513th FIS. John Hutson was killed on 14 January 1958 during the squadron's next Libya deployment. His aircraft ran out of fuel on finals to Wheelus and crashed short of the runway. His loss was widely felt.

Like its sister squadrons within the 406th FIW, the 513th FIS was reassigned to the 86th FIW in 1958 and moved to Phalsbourg AB in France on 16 April. The squadron deployed to Wheelus from 3 to 30 September 1958 for aerial rocketry training, returning the following August, and making its final visit from 15 March to 19 April 1960. The squadron carried out two other deployments during this period. The first, to Brindisi in Italy, was for one month during May and June of 1959. The 513th FIS then deployed to Aalborg AB in Denmark from 22 August to 2 September 1960, taking over for the 514th FIS.

With the drawdown of F-86D units in Europe, many aircraft had been assigned into the 513th FIS, and from June 1959 many of the higher-time aircraft were sent to the 3131st Air Repair Squadron at Chateauroux in France for scrapping. Finally, in preparation for its inactivation, most flying ceased in August 1960 and all remaining F-86Ds were flown out to Chateauroux during November. The majority of these aircraft were overhauled and sold to the Yugoslav Air Force (which did not receive MAP aid at this time). The 513th FIS was finally inactivated on 8 January 1961.

At top, 52-4082 was displayed at RAF Shepherds Grove Armed Forces Display on 18 May 1957. It was flown by 1stLt Blevins. (Morson Piercy via Nicolau) At right, after reassignment to the 86th FIW in 1958, 513th Sabres were re-marked with a red and black sunburst tail design. 52-4140 was passed-on to the Yugoslav AF in November 1960. (Jack Friell)



514TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Like its sister unit, the 514th FIS began converting from F-86Fs to the F-86D in October 1954. The unit's base was RAF Manston and the squadron was assigned to the 406th FIW. LtCol George Hubler had been assigned in July 1954 to command the squadron and he took the 514th FIS into the interceptor era. All of the squadron's aircraft were initially F-86D-45 and -50 aircraft, brought to Europe as deck cargo and unloaded at St. Nazaire in France. In July 1954, twenty-three F-86D-45s had been delivered straight from the factory to Newark, New Jersey, for preservation and loading aboard a US Navy vessel. From the beginning of August, all subsequent aircraft, comprising four F-86D-45 and forty-three F-86D-50s for the 406th FIW (including twenty-five for 87th FIS), were flown to Brookley AFB in Alabama and readied for shipment by sea from Mobile.

Above, while with the 406th FIW, the 514th wore a blue lightning bolt on the lower forward fuselage. 019 was Col William S. Harrell's aircraft and had a red-yellow-blue fuselage band for a while. Harrell was the Wing's Operations Officer. (D. Callahan via Isham) Bottom, Col Harrell's aircraft at a later date with the fuselage stripes removed and the 514th squadron insignia added to the tail. The canopy frame is blue in both photos with the Colonel's name applied to it. (via Fred Roos)

The Sabres from Newark arrived in France during mid-August and those from Mobile in two batches from mid-September and early December. Once in France, the 7485th Air Depot Wing at St. Nazaire carried out an enormous amount of corrosion rectification work on the aircraft prior to test flying and delivery to Manston.

During the early part of 1955, an F-86D simulator was installed at Manston, one of only two in Europe at the time. The 10-ton simulator was used for up to 55 hours per week, with each prospective F-86D pilot getting 15 to 20 hours of "time" prior to soloing in a real aircraft.

The month-long rocketry deployments to Libya did not take place until 1956 as the unit was heavily involved in qualifying pilots to fly the F-86D during 1955. However, at the end of 1955, Manston briefly played host to location camera crews filming the movie "The Iron Petticoat" starring Bob Hope and Katherine Hepburn. The storyline told of a defecting female Soviet pilot who lands her "MiG" in Germany at the height of the Cold War. The stars were never involved in the Manston scenes, and those parts of the film shot at the base amounted to less than five minutes in the final "cut". However, director Ralph Thomas enlisted pilots and aircraft of the 514th FIS to fly the "intercept" scenes, and used a C-119 with the rear cargo doors removed for capturing the aerial shots. The finished film showed some nice views of F-86Ds intercepting the "MiG" (actually a 92nd FBS F-84F), though little

else of interest crops up in this unremarkable movie.

The 514th FIS took in its first Wheelus deployment in May 1956. Once the firing missions began, there would always be another aircraft flying "wing", whose crew alerted the 'hot" pilot of any important information. At Wheelus, this task was usually undertaken by the 406th's own T-33s, but sometimes the resident 7272nd Aircraft Gunnery Group's F-86Fs performed the job. Leading the 7272nd was the legendary WWII Mustang ace Robin Olds, who later became C.O. of an F-4 Wing in Vietnam. Milton Torres had Olds fly his wing during a gunnery sortie and remembers him and his select band of friends very well:

> **"He [Olds] flew chase for me while I was flying rocketry in Libya. His wife was the movie star Ella Raines. While we were in Libya [circa 1956] they were shooting "Legend of the Lost" in the desert with Sophia Loren and John Wayne. Somehow they were invited to the Officers Club at Wheelus AB through social efforts on Ella Raines' behalf. John Wayne showed up with Robin at the bar, whereupon he [Wayne] bought the bar for all the fighter pilots. That was back in the days when he smoked profusely, and drank more than he did in the movies. He was quite a man!"**

The 514th FIS returned to Wheelus in January 1957 and again during February and March of 1958.

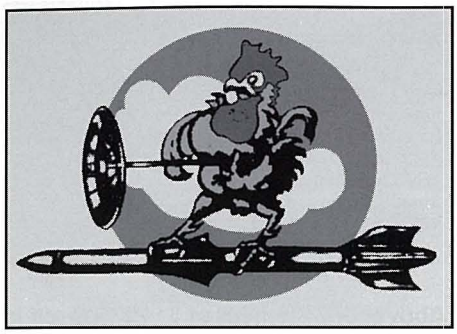
The squadron's first major accident with the F-86D occurred on the night of 19 November 1956. As 1stLt. Edgar Lewis put his "Dog" down onto Manston's tarmac, the right main-wheel tire burst and the aircraft careered off Runway 11 towards a perimeter road. Unfortunately, just as Lt Lewis crashed through the perimeter fence, a car was travelling along the road at the precise point where 14,000 pounds of Sabre, travelling at barely abated speed, crossed it. The driver was killed instantly and the roof was ripped from his car by the force of the impact.

Above, this element of 514th Sabres is returning to England following the 1956 rocket deployment to Libya. Aircraft have a blue harpoon motif on the forward fuselage. (Milt Torres) Bottom, 406th FIW represented USAFE at the October 1956 Yuma rocket meet. Aircraft were borrowed from the 331st FIS. Team members were: back row L-R Capt Teater (512th), Col Harrell (406th), 1stLt Hutson (513th), Capt Eicher (514th). Front row: 1stLt Moss (512th), Flying Officer Kitcatt (RAF), Flight Lt Kehoe (RAF), and 1stLt Roberson. (Bill Moss)

It had been Lewis's first night flight out of Manston and fortunately he was unhurt. His Sabre, 52-4141, was dismantled and trucked to the Burtonwood depot and later scrapped there.

With the inactivation of 406th FIW in 1958 (local protests about noise at Manston being a major concern), the 514th FIS was reassigned to the 86th FIW at Landstuhl AB in West Germany on 15 May 1958. Landstuhl was re-named Ramstein AB in August 1958.

The 514th continued the month-long visits to Libya by deploying there during October of 1958, returning in October 1959, before commencing the last Sabre practice camp on 23 May 1960. In parallel with its sister squadron, the 514th FIS deployed to Brindisi on 1 June 1959 for one month, and then detached to Aalborg from 3 to 12 August 1960. All Sabres were then flown out to the 3130th Air Base Group at Chateauroux from 10 November and by 18 November 1960 the last 514th FIS F-86Ds had departed Ramstein. The squadron was inactivated on 8 January 1961.



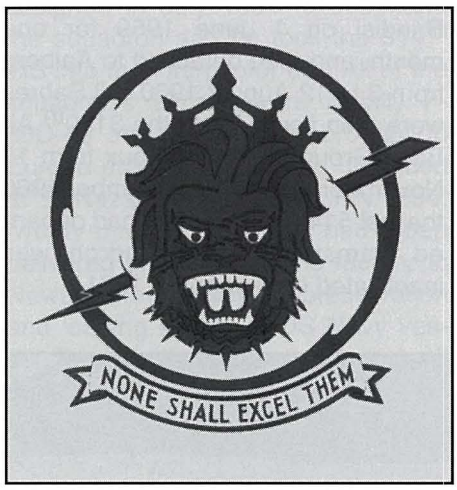
Above, like its sister units, the 514th adopted the 86th FIW color scheme in 1958. The squadron used black and white as unit colors. (Jack Friell)

518TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

The 518th FIS was activated on 8 January 1955 under 27th Air Division control at George AFB in California. The majority of the squadron's aircraft – mainly F-86D-21s – were not assigned until mid-March, however, although the delivery process, once started, was rapid. All of the F-86Ds came straight from Pull-Out modification and by the first week in May the squadron was fully equipped.

Almost immediately new F-86D-55 aircraft then began to arrive and from mid-May a number of the F-86D-21s were transferred back to McClellan AFB.

Alas, before the unit could fully re-equip, Project Arrow on 18 August 1955 inactivated the 518th FIS. All the squadron's aircraft and personnel became property of the 329th FIS.



519TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Activated on 8 December 1954 at Sioux City Municipal Airport, Iowa, the 519th FIS was assigned to the 521st Air Defense Group. Initially, the squadron possessed no combat aircraft and the skeleton staff was commanded by 1stLt Milo L. Messner. On 10 January 1955, command of the squadron passed to Maj William H. Stewart, but the 519th FIS still had received no fighter aircraft. Finally, on 16 May 1955, the first F-86D was assigned from NAA at Fresno and by the end of the month half-a-dozen Sabres had arrived. Equipping was completed on 19 July with the arrival of 52-3768 and –3687 to bring the complement up to twenty-seven F-86D-41s; all were delivered from Pull-Out modification at Fresno. However, on 18 August 1955, under Project Arrow, the unit's designation was changed to the 13th FIS and the 519th FIS was inactivated. To its credit the squadron had lost no aircraft in its brief eight-month existence.

Above, F-86D-21 51-3082 was with the 520th from March to June 1955. It and 53-909 have four stars on each drop tank, while 53-866 only has one. (K. Lotz via Isham)

520TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

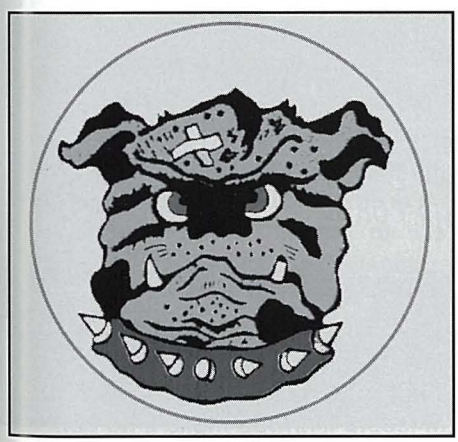
Activated at Geiger AFB, Washington, on 8 December 1954, the 520th FIS was immediately assigned to the 530th Air Defense Group control.

Squadron commander was Maj. Garth L. Reynolds, and on 11 February 1955 he saw the first of his aircraft – a trio of F-86D-40s – transferred in from the 445th FIS. On the same day, as callsign "Geiger Tiger 1", Reynolds flew the 520th's first Sabre mission. At this point, the squadron had just seven pilots assigned.

The squadron retained just three Sabres for a full month until F-86D-21s began to arrive from McClellan AFB on 10 March. The three F-86D-40s were concurrently transferred to McClellan for Pull-Out conversion, the last of nine D-21s being assigned during May 1955. Incredibly, the D-21 aircraft only served for a short period; they were in turn lost in favor of twenty-three brand-new F-86D-60s, which arrived at Geiger starting on 5 April. Now assigned its full complement of 28 Sabre pilots, on 25 April 1955 the Geiger Tigers pulled their first alert.

Prior to this, the 520th FIS had suffered its first accident when the pilot of 53-854 became disoriented during an IFR letdown on 18 April. The pilot ejected safely. A second crash occurred on 10 August 1955 when the pilot of 53-860 ejected in an inverted spin. Ten days later, Project Arrow renumbered the unit as the 498th FIS, and the 520th FIS number was inactivated.

Above, 52-3840 was one of only three pre-Pull-Out aircraft assigned to the 520th. It was the squadron commanders aircraft and had three blue diagonal lines to match the canopy frame and tail. It was assigned from 11 February through 14 March 1955 and retained the black and white drop tank trim of its original user, the 445th FIS. It also retained insignia red wing tips from the 445th. The stars on the canopy frame and tail were white over blue and the red and white shark mouth was outlined in blue. (USAF via Isham)



525TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Based out of Landstuhl AB in Germany, the 525th FIS came under 86th FIW control and flew F-86Fs until late in 1954. The unit remained designated as a Fighter Bomber Squadron until 9 August 1954, when arrival of F-86Ds changed the unit's mission.

The first F-86Ds for the 525th FIS were brand-new F-86D-45s, ferried in from St. Nazaire during late August. Further deliveries to the squadron began a year later when overhauled F-86D-36s arrived from Shorts Brothers in Belfast, Northern Ireland. 525th FIS aircraft were painted with a

Above, 525th FIS F-86D-36 51-8377 in unit markings consisting of a blue and white tail sunburst, and a blue nose scallop outlined in white. The aircraft formerly served with the 317th FIS. (R. Anderson via Isham)

Above, blue and white trimmed 525th FIS F-86D-36 in February 1955 at Landstuhl AB. (via Norm Taylor)

blue and white sunburst design on the vertical fin, and a blue scalloped design was applied to the nose, outlined in white. This scheme was retained until 1957 when a directive decreed that the nose scallop be removed (as with 526th FIS). At around this time the squadron transferred its remaining F-86D-36s to other units within the 86th FIW and standardized on the F-86D-45. The squadron moved to Bitburg AB on 12 February 1957.

In January 1959 the squadron began conversion to the F-102 and started to ferry out its Sabres; it became the first USAFE unit to receive the Delta Dagger. Many of the F-86Ds were transferred to other squadrons within the 86th FIW.

526TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Based out of Landstuhl AB in Germany, the 526th FIS operated under 86th FIW control and flew the F-86F until late in 1954. The unit was actually designated as a Fighter Bomber Squadron until 9 August 1954, when the impending arrival of F-86Ds meant that a change to FIS was warranted.

The first Dogs to arrive were brand-new F-86D-45s, all flying in from St. Nazaire from the end of August. Further deliveries to the squadron began a year later when

Above, this F-86D-36 was painted in squadron commander's markings of four red stripes outlined in white. Nose scallop was red outlined in white and the tail was also red and white. This aircraft was the mount of LtCol William Brierty and carried a black rosette on each drop tank to denote rank. Nose gear door has "243" painted in red. (Jerome P. Burton)

overhauled F-86D-36s arrived from Shorts Brothers in Belfast. 526th FIS aircraft were initially painted with a red and white sunburst design on the vertical fin, whilst on the nose a red scalloped design was applied, outlined in white. This scheme was retained until 1957 when a directive decreed that the nose scallop be removed. At around this time the squadron transferred its remaining F-86D-45s to other units within the 86th FIW and standardised on the F-86D-36.

The squadron immediately began round-the-clock Zulu alerts and it was often found that the crew chief was better placed to start the engine ready for the pilot in the event of a scramble. To formalise this procedure, in 1957 all crew chiefs were checked out in taxi and engine run-up procedures and this meant that certain ground crew members were able to start up the Sabre's engine, taxi it to the alert pad and also carry out compass swings. This often helped the serviceability state, as problems noted during this time could be rectified by maintenance personnel before an actual scramble was called.

Conditions in Germany were often difficult. Jerome P. Burton was with the squadron from the early days and recalls that he had a few close shaves as a result of the weather:

"Snow, ice and rain caused many problems for unwary crew chiefs and yours truly was not exempt. I've done *two complete turns* in an F-86D that was spinning on ice and narrowly avoided disaster, having done nothing wrong or stupid. It prompted salt and alcohol to be used more freely at the alert pad parking area though, which was on a slight downhill grade. In the winter tires often froze to the concrete, so besides wing and canopy exhaust covers plus nose plugs, we had to use alcohol to melt snow and ice near the wing fillet as well as pour alcohol around each tire on particularly cold days, jack up the tires, rotate them and sit them back down in a pool of alcohol! It was always comical on a wet and freezing day to remove the canopy covers and set them down on frozen straps, the covers still in the shape of the canopy and looking like big grey bugs. Drag chutes were never left in their compartments due to the probability of freezing and only installed prior to the flight."

Above, in 1957, all 526th FIS Sabres had the nose scallop removed and "U.S. AIR FORCE" moved slightly forward on the fuselage. 52-4102 would later become the Wing Commander's aircraft and was being polished in preparation. Note the remnants of the nose scallop on top of the nose. (Jerome P. Burton) Bottom, 52-4102 after becoming the 86th FIW commander's aircraft. The aircraft retained basic 526th colors with the addition of multi-colored fuselage and drop tank stripes. Colors from front-to-back were: red-yellow-blue-orange-black all outlined in white. (Jerome P. Burton)

Taking its nickname from the squadron badge, the Black Knights of the 526th FIS set an impressive number of maintenance and rocket firing records within USAFE. On a number of occasions the unit managed to get just about the whole squadron airborne – a truly impressive feat when one considers the complexity of the Dog and its resultant low serviceability rate.

In 1958 the squadron was just finishing up its annual Wheelus rocketry deployment when word came down of the crisis in Lebanon. Internal struggles in that nation threatened to prejudice stability of the Middle East, and American action was demanded, to ensure that problems did not spread

At left, in the late '50s, the 526th transferred out all its 52 fiscal year aircraft and standardized on the F-86D-36. 51-6229 is unusual (for 526th FIS) in placing the buzz number ahead of the "star and bar" on the fuselage side. (Burton)

to USAF bases in North Africa and the Middle East. The 526th FIS was told to remain at Wheelus in a show of strength, as Jerry Burton recalls:

> **"The Arabs were housed in a high-walled city on base. Someone decided that an F-86D with its 24 rockets could be a formidable deterrent to prevent the Arabs from overrunning the base. Four F-86Ds, two at each end of their compound (I was told) were positioned so that their combined firepower could perhaps deter the Arabs from making a foolish mistake. For the rocket package to operate on the ground, the aircraft had to be in an airborne position, i.e. gear retracted and strategically-selected rockets removed to prevent their firing blowing the nose jack off from under it! A C26 power unit was used to keep power on the birds at all times (with hydraulics), with a pilot I believe on four-hour watch complete with makeshift umbrellas to give him and the maintenance crew some semblance of relief from the blazing sun. In a few days we packed up and went back to Germany."**

Despite the distraction, the 526th FIS had done well at Wheelus and was selected to take part in the 1958 "William Tell" USAF weapons meet at Tyndall AFB in Florida.

Late in 1959, the squadron began ferrying out its Sabres in preparation for the conversion onto F-102A Delta Daggers. A few F-86Ds remained for some time, however, and it was not until June 1960 that the last aircraft departed, bound for FIAT in Italy and further service with the air forces of Yugoslavia and Greece.

Above, just visible on the red tail of this 538th FIS Sabre is the black stylized eagle's head painted on the unit's aircraft. 52-4179 was an F-86D-45. (Dorman Beckner)

538TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

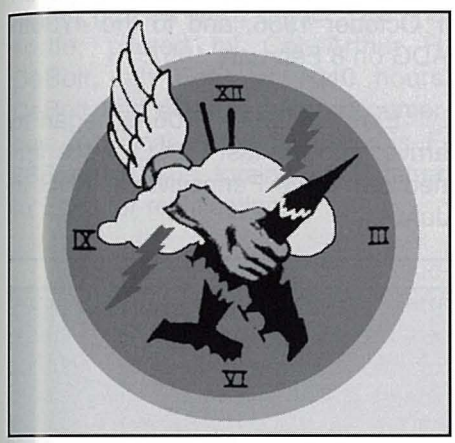
The 538th FIS was activated on 18 August 1955 as part of Project Arrow at Larson AFB, WA, with F-86Ds. The unit was initially assigned to 9th Air Division. The Sabres, along with personnel and equipment, were gained from the 323rd FIS, which concurrently transferred its number to Truax AFB. The 323rd FIS had previously transferred most of its Sabres out for modification at McClellan AFB, and the 538th FIS therefore inherited only a few F-86D-41s and –50s initially. The bulk of overhauled ex-323rd FIS F-86D-45s arrived back at Larson from the end of August 1955. The following month, the unit's three F-86D-41s were transferred to the 497th FIS, and the 538th FIS ran under-strength for some months. The situation was remedied somewhat in April 1956 when five F-86D-60s were gained from the 327th FIS; they were lost the following month, being ferried out for F-86L modification.

The 538th FIS took part in only one Yuma detachment with F-86Ds; from 26 January to 19 February 1956. On 1 December 1956, the 538th FIS was reassigned to 4721st Air Defense Group control. Two aircraft always stood on alert at Larson, and aircraft were routinely scrambled to practice reaction procedures. At 2111 hours on 4 April 1957, one such scramble was called and two of the squadron's F-86Ds were immediately on their way. Four minutes later both were airborne, 52-4079 piloted by 2ndLt John Trapp and 52-4258 with

1stLt John Kennedy aboard. Kennedy was the element leader and once the GCI site had cancelled the intercept, he decided to practice night formation flying to burn off fuel before landing. The two aircraft then commenced a join-up at 14,000 feet, but things did not go to plan. Lt Trapp reported that he could not see his leader and Kennedy then advised that he would instead join up on the number 2. Unfortunately, in the dark Washington sky these two aircraft managed to collide and Kennedy's Sabre was pushed into an inverted, nose low attitude. He managed to eject at 5,000 feet and survived with just a cut to the back of his neck. Lt Trapp's aircraft remained relatively stable, and despite having a drop tank twisted 90 degrees on its mount was recovered safely to Larson. A close call indeed.

The 538th FIS received F-86Ls from April 1957 and the unit's remaining F-86D-45 and –50 aircraft were swapped at Fresno and Inglewood for modified machines. The process was complete in June of the same year. The squadron gained a mix of F-86L-50 and –60 aircraft, deploying them for rocket firing to Vincent AFB from 7 September to 5 October 1957. The unit also sent its F-86Ls for a two-week TDY to Wendover AFB in February 1958.

The F-86Ls were phased out in favor of the F-104A from May 1958, though the last Sabres departed as late as January 1959. Although some of these were passed to sister unit 322nd FIS, the vast majority of ex-538th FIS Sabres went to Utah ANG at Salt Lake City.



Above, 539th FIS aircraft were marked with 5-white stars on a blue tail band outlined in white. F-86D-60 53-1071 was inherited from the 5th FIS. (USAF via Barry Miller) Below, 539th pilot poses with his F-86L 53-916 at an open house in 1959. (Don Spering)

539TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

Activated on 18 April 1954 at Stewart AFB NY with the F-86F, the 539th FIS was immediately assigned to the 4709th Defense Wing. On 20 September the squadron was reassigned to 4700th ADG control. Life of the F-86Fs was short, however, for in January 1955 drag 'chute-equipped F-86D-21s began to arrive straight from the Fresno conversion line. The last F-86Fs were relinquished in May 1955, but at the same time, brand-new F-86D-60s were assigned to the unit, and a great exodus of old F-86F and D aircraft was performed.

Finally with new equipment, the 539th FIS began to work up, howev-

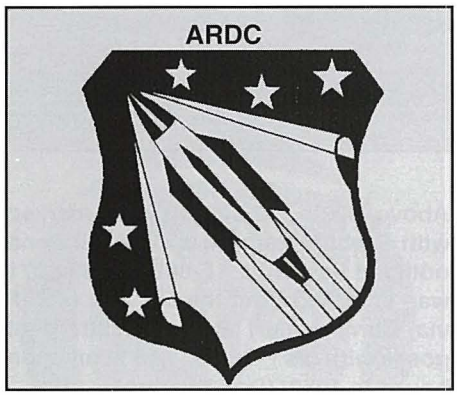
At left, 539th F-86L 53-4021 was painted in this high-viz da-glo scheme in 1959, just prior to phase-out. Aircraft has da-glo nose and rear fuselage stripes, outer wing panels and drop tanks. (R. Esposito via Isham)

er, new F-86D-60s were not delivered until 5 August 1955 – just two weeks before another upheaval.

Project Arrow on 18 August moved the 539th FIS – less personnel and equipment – to McGuire AFB in New Jersey, where it took over 5th FIS F-86D-60s. The unit was at the same time assigned back under the 4709th DW alongside the 332nd FIS at McGuire. Rocket firing at Yuma AFB was accomplished during November and December of 1955.

The arrival of F-86Ls in November 1956 allowed the F-86Ds to be routed through conversion. Despite the realignment carried out under Project Arrow, the 539th FIS was assigned to the 4621st ADW on 1 October 1956, and to the 4730th ADG on 8 February 1957.

Early in 1959, F-106As began to arrive, and the last F-86Ls were ferried out to the Pennsylvania ANG in July.



2750TH AIR BASE GROUP, WRIGHT PATTERSON AFB

Wright-Patterson-based 2750th ABG was assigned its first F-86D-1 on 21 May 1952 and aside from test duties, this and another four early-model Sabre Dogs flew in the test support role as chase aircraft. 50-477 was one of the last two F-86Ds operating from Wright-Patterson, and on 12 October 1956 it was donated to the USAF Museum.

Above, 50-477 was one of very few F-86Ds that did not go through Pull-Out conversion. Late in its life it was fitted with a non-standard, broad-chord, extended-length rudder trim tab, and ARDC badge on the fuselage side. (Dave Menard)

3200TH PROOF TEST WING, EGLIN AFB

The USAF Armament Center at Eglin AFB on Florida's Gulf Coast was established in 1951, the Center's job being to test and evaluate new weapon systems for the Air Force. When production F-86Ds began to roll-off the line in 1952, Eglin AFB received top priority in getting the aircraft through armament test; as a result, on March 19, 1952, Eglin received its first F-86D-1. By the end of September a further dozen D-1 and D-5 models had been delivered under Air Research and Development Command project 2F-371. All were assigned to 3200th Proof Test Wing (PTW)

Key among the F-86D's evaluation requirements was the demonstration of the system's destructive capabilities, and Eglin was assigned a number of unmanned QB-17G Flying Fortress drones for live testing. QB-17s were directed into the target area by a ground station, but once there, 65 miles off Florida's Gulf Coast, the drone was taken over by a remote control pilot sitting in the nose of a DB-17G control aircraft. The DB-17 was a fully-crewed drone director conversion of the Flying Fortress bomber, designed to follow the drone at a safe distance – usually about a mile aft – and to fly the drone through the whole intercept mission.

On the morning of 25 August 1952, a number of live-fire F-86D missions were programmed, each utilising rockets with inert warheads. The idea was that complete destruction of the QB-17 should be avoided so that it could be recovered for damage and accuracy assessment. Every Sabre mission planned for that day would use the F-86D-1, equipped with the less capable E-3 radar system.

The first F-86D mission departed Eglin at 0800 hours, and results were mixed; poor lock-ons and aircraft unserviceabilities meant that few rocket passes were made. The final sortie, piloted by Col Arthur R. DeBolt, left Eglin at 1040 hours. DeBolt had already suffered numerous technical problems with his F-86D, s/n 50-469, forcing him to return to Eglin for rectification.

DeBolt's first two passes concluded in stern intercepts and both were aborted; on his third pass he realized that he had locked onto the director DB-17 and again ceased his attack. He therefore set himself up for his fourth – and last – attack profile.

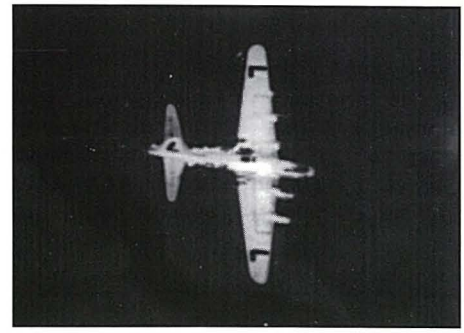
This time, Col De Bolt identified his target at 16,000 yards, and received a radar lock-on at 12,000 yards. He would have been mostly looking down into his radar scope by this time, and with his hand control made a manual radar sweep ahead to ensure that he was indeed locking-on to the drone aircraft. In deteriorating visibility he then selected a 12-rocket salvo before looking up for a final visual confirmation of the target. The dozen rockets were then seen to stream away from the Sabre and everything initially looked good. The deadly salvo slammed into the B-17, registering hits from the left wing back to the tail and sent pieces of debris falling earthward. The B-17 started spinning out of control, and the tail section was seen to break away as it plummeted into the Gulf, 70 miles south of Eglin AFB. A number of observers then spotted parachutes emerging from the stricken Fortress; DeBolt had fired on the director, *not* the drone. The time was 11:20 am.

At least five, or possibly six crew members were seen to bail out of the stricken aircraft by various observers. The crash area was 78 miles south-south-east of Eglin. Incredibly, two of the B-17's eight-man crew had survived. Airman Third Class Peter Rosing jumped at 15,000 feet and was in free-fall for 3,000 feet as he struggled to get his poorly-fastened 'chute open. Both he and fellow survivor Staff Sergeant Charles A. Jones – the radio operator - then spent nearly a day in a raft before being rescued, suffering from exposure and exhaustion. Despite an intensive sea search, no other crew members were ever found; all were listed as missing, presumed dead. Arthur DeBolt recovered his Sabre to Eglin without further drama, where no fault could be found with his aircraft.

Eglin's initial F-86D armament test function was completed in September 1952 and seven of the unit's F-86Ds were immediately assigned elsewhere. The remaining aircraft were retained at Eglin for test support and chase duties until June 1955.

In late 1954, two new F-86D-50s were assigned to Eglin under ARDC Project 5F-75, and these were joined by three new F-86D-55s in January 1955. It is presumed that these machines were involved in Control System Tie-In (CSTI) testing and evaluation, along with 50-494, which was on bailment from North American on 23 May 1955. These aircraft were all re-designated as JF-86D temporary test machines on January 1, 1956; upon completion of this phase, they were transferred out in late 1956.

On 1 May 1957, 51-6009 was assigned to Eglin from bailment with Hughes. It was immediately put to work as a test support and chase aircraft, probably in anticipation of F-86L testing. Despite the latter system being introduced into USAF service in the latter part of 1956, Eglin did not get its hands on the SAGE-equipped interceptor until the following year. From late July 1957, nine or more F-86Ls were assigned from the 49th FIS at Hanscom AFB and in August from the 330th FIS at Stewart AFB. All of these aircraft were immediately given JF-86L temporary test designations and operated from Eglin until mid-September. All were then returned to F-86L status and returned to their parent units. 51-6009, Eglin's sole remaining Sabre Dog, was finally removed from service in November 1958 and scrapped.

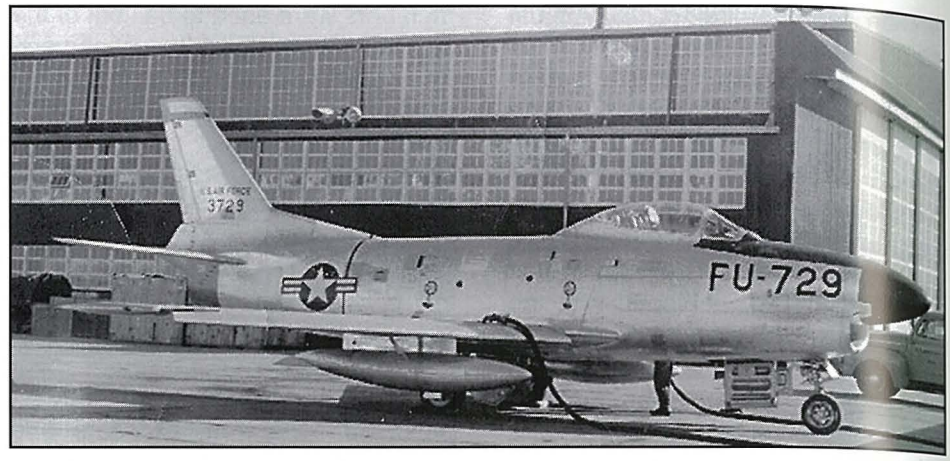


Above, aftermath of Col DeBolt's F-86D live-fire: DB-17G 44-83680 slowly spins out of control to the ocean below. Damage to the left wing root and resultant flame can just be discerned. (via Craig Fuller) Bottom, typical of the first F-86Ds assigned to Eglin AFB, 50-496 bears no identifying markings. It served with the 3200th PTG (Proof Test Group) until August 1953. (D. Curtis collection)

3320TH TECHNICAL TRAINING WING, AMARILLO AFB TX.

Home to Single Engine Jet Fighter School (ground personnel), the 3320th TTW received three F-86D-1s in late 1954/early 1955. Two post-Pull-Out F-86Ds then replaced the early aircraft in April 1955 along with an F-86D-55, serial 53-729.

In December 1956, a half-dozen redundant TF-86D aircraft were flown into Amarillo from the 4750th ADW at Yuma, and these formed the backbone of the training fleet in the late 'fifties. In November 1956, a solitary F-86L-11 had also been assigned, and served in the ground instructional role until April 1958.



Amarillo's last two training Sabres, TF-86Ds 50-493 and –501, were redesignated as GTF-86D permanent ground training aircraft on 24 October 1962 and authorized for reclamation on 21 February 1963.

Above, stock F-86D-55 53-729 was assigned to Amarillo in 1956 as a training aid. Instead of pressure fueling through single-point receptacle on the left fuselage side, the aircraft is being fueled manually through the the wing filler ports. (D. Curtis collection)

3345TH TECHNICAL TRAINING WING CHANUTE AFB IL.

Responsible for training most of the ground personnel who maintained the F-86D, Chanute was also the base for Mobile Training Detachments (MTDs) that went out to teach the squadrons how to maintain the aircraft. Air crews also were taught the aircraft's systems. Dick Schneider instructed in the Sabre's afterburning J47 engine as part of MTD F86-15. From 1954 to 1956 this small team taught on operational Air Defense bases:

"The personnel were experienced, but not on the "care and feeding of the Dog." Our detachment (all MTDs) were treated as guests of the Base Commander and our class passes read "Special Off Duty Hours."

"Once, at Larson AFB, the base went on Red Alert. We sent our students to their duty stations. I got in my car to go home. At the base gate, I showed my pass and was waved through. I noticed that the car behind me was turned back on to the base. The next day, at the PX, a Major came up to me and demanded to know how I got off the base when he was not allowed to leave (I was an A/1c). I showed him my Class A pass and he shut-up."

Above, 3345th TTW at Chanute used a variety of aircraft for training. 51-6211 was an F-86D-36 assigned in February 1955. Unlike many of the unit's aircraft, which later returned to regular USAF use, this aircraft was still with the Training Wing in 1963 when it was donated to the local town of Altamont for display. (Dave Menard)

"Another little perk we got was our travel order read "at the convenience of the government." That meant that we got officer mileage allowances no matter what our rank. This never failed to make the sign-in at base finance real fun. Usually we had to have them call our detachment commander because they wouldn't believe lowly A/2c and A/1c. One other thing. I have no idea if other people did this, but I thought it was required. When we didn't have students, I went down to the flight line and worked with a crew chief or in the engine shop. My personal belief was that if people (pilots) were going to bet their ass on my work, I'd damn sure better know what I was doing and talking about."

Instruction for the pilot's 5-day course included:

1.) Basic jet propulsion theory.
2.) Normal engine operating procedures with an overview of engine components.
3.) Emergency operations and procedures.

Crew Chiefs and assistants undertook a 10-day course that included:

1.) Basic jet propulsion theory.
2.) Normal starting procedures, with a quick overview of engine components.
3.) Normal operations and inspection procedures.
4.) Emergency system checks.

Finally, on their 20-day course, Engine Shop personnel were taught:

1.) Basic jet propulsion theory.
2.) Operation, inspection, removal and replacement of engine "Hot Section" components.
3.) Operation, inspection, removal and replacement of engine accessories.
4.) Test cell operations and system checks.
5.) Airframe/engine installation procedure.

In order to provide 'hands-on' training of ground personnel at Chanute, the 3345th TTW was assigned a number of F-86D aircraft, beginning with 50-478, a brand-new F-86D-1 on 11 September 1952. Six further F-86D-1 and –15 airframes were assigned to Chanute for ground training before a handful of Pull-Out aircraft superseded the early-model aircraft during early 1955.

Chanute's final two Sabre Dogs, F-86D-21s 51-2976/3032, were transferred to local schools in May 1958.

3415TH TECHNICAL TRAINING WING, LOWRY AFB, TX

Lowry AFB's 3415th TTW was responsible for the technical training of ground personnel in maintenance and operation of E-4, E-5 and E-6 Fire Control Systems. It appears that no Sabres were assigned for some time: airframes from the 3320th TTW were "borrowed" for hands-on training. However, on 16 March 1956, two aircraft, F-86D-16 s/n 50-731 and F-86D-21 s/n 51-2996, were transferred to the 3415th from Perrin AFB. They were used by the Training Wing until June 1958.

3550TH COMBAT CREW TRAINING WING

Based at Moody AFB in Georgia's Okefenokee swamp area, the 3550th CCTW served as a USAF interceptor training unit. Thus, many of those that passed out of Moody's school did not necessarily go on to fly the Sabre. With the run-down of F-86D operations at Tyndall, the 3550th CCTW took on much of the training burden alongside the 3555th CCTW at Perrin. Training squadrons were the 3551st, 3552nd and 3553rd Combat Crew Training Squadrons.

Most of the Sabres operated by the 3550th CCTW were F-86Ls, but to begin the process, on 13 March 1957 two F-86D-21s were transferred from Tyndall, followed by a pair of F-86D-41s in June. However, with the arrival of F-86Ls in May 1957, training proper could begin. Most of these F-86Ls were assigned straight from conversion and formed two training squadrons at Moody. Bill Piper was assigned to one of these F-86L units:

"When the students reported to Moody from their pilot training bases, we were sent through an advanced instrument training course. I think it was a 20 flying hour course plus the academics. We flew the T-33 for this 20 hours and worked on everything from unusual attitudes to precision ILS's. All of the instructors were qualified to shoot approaches to less than 100 Ft. and 1/4 mile as I remember. One squadron had academics in the morning and the other was flying and visa versa."

Above, Moody-based Sabres were characterized by three horizontal fin stripes. Those on 51-6078 were green. Other 3550th CCTW aircraft wore a combination of colors on the tail stripes. For example, 51-6078 had upper and lower red stripes and a yellow center stripe. Aircraft had a da-glo nose and wide rear fuselage stripe and foreward top of the wing tank tips. This aircraft was retired as a display aircraft at Milton, WV. (JMG Gradidge)

"After the instrument school we went into the F-86L training where we learned the principles of radar and interception tactics. As students, we didn't fire any rockets, but we practiced intercepts which were directed by our local GCI site which was located at Moody. On some missions, we were chased by our instructor pilots and given instruction. Most of the time we ran these intercepts on T-33 target aircraft with a pod that provided additional radar reflection. The T-birds were flown by the students. The 86 had a [Nadar] "black box" that we put into the aircraft to record our intercepts. It displayed the lock-on and all of the steering data until the ultimate "splash," or shoot down. We put this "can"

into a machine when we got back from our mission to review and critique our intercepts. Records were kept during our training and as I remember, I was one of two guys that scored the best in intercepts. The other was Perry Hubbard, who retired as a colonel."

"The radars were not the best in the world at the time because the fire control system was not solid state and was made up of vacuum tubes which caused problems as you went to high altitude. Most of the time, if you could pick up the target at 8 to 10 miles you were doing real good. We were required to sight the fighter from the target airplane and the fighter would call 20 seconds which meant 20 seconds until firing and at that point the target would say clear or call ten seconds. The target pilot was checking to make certain that the fighter was moving on his windscreen. If it was stationary at ten seconds it meant that the fire control system had set up the fighter and target for a collision course and if that happened, we would say "heads up" and the fighter and target would separate themselves from a collision. I can remember on one occasion, we had a student collide with his target at night over the Okefenokee Swamp. He was never found."

"The other thing about the F-86L that wasn't the best was the fact that it had an electronic fuel control that caused problems sometimes. This gave some problems occasionally and the aircraft would go to minimum fuel flow of about 300 pounds per hour and as a result no power. We lost one of my classmates from that problem because he didn't go into emergency fuel. He crashed short of the runway because the A/C went into that mode about five miles out on final."

"One of the things that I recall about the training was the fact that we had one sortie where we climbed to about 45,000 feet and rolled the airplane into a vertical dive and light the burner to exceed the sound barrier. As you passed through the barrier, the airplane would give about a quarter roll and stabilize slightly above Mach one. When you pulled it out of burner, the airplane would go subsonic. Of course we couldn't stay in this position for very long because we were descending at a rate of around 66,000 feet-per-minute. When we returned we all got the Mach Buster pin and certificate. That was our first experience with exceeding the speed of sound."

"The entire Combat Crew Training advanced course lasted about five months and from Moody we went to various bases throughout the world. In my case, I went to the 482nd FIS at Seymour Johnson AFB, NC, and F-102's. Others went to Japan, Germany, Taiwan, and other US bases."

Moody's Sabres were identified by three horizontal tail stripes; other than the high-viz da-glo painted areas, no other special markings were carried. F-86L training at Moody began to draw down in mid-1960; the few F-86Ds assigned had all been flown out by the end of 1957. Reassignment of aircraft started in July 1960, most flying straight out to storage at Davis-Monthan, but a few were passed to the 3555th CCTW at Perrin. The final Sabres left Moody on 30 November 1960.

3552ND FLYING TRAINING SQUADRON, MOODY AFB

John K. Lewis was a graduate of the 3552nd and had this to say about the training program:

"Moody AFB in Vaidosta, Georgia, and Sheppard AFB in Texas were the current locations for Fighter Interceptor training, We went to Moody anxious to get our hands on the F-86, but that's not the way it happened. The first six weeks of school was dedicated to instrument training. We all found ourselves in the rear seat of the venerable T-33, under the hood, taking instrument training. They started us out right where we had been several months before, with the basics, and proceeded to go through the instrument course one page at a time. Since intercepts can be conducted at any hour of the day or night in all kinds of weather, it was understandable that they wanted us to know instrument flying backwards and forwards, but a 21-year-old 2ndLt doesn't think that way.

"The instrument training progressed slowly but was finally over and then we went on to F-86 ground school. Of course the big item was that there are no two-seat F-86Ls. All of us would have to master the Sabre on our first flight. We did have an instructor flying chase, but he couldn't fly the thing for us. My first ride was a little exciting. We briefed the initial ride, preflighted and launched. All we had to do was day familiarization, but at frequent intervals the IP would call for a fuel check. The two drop tanks were used first, then we went to internal fuel. Since the drops didn't have gauges, they were thought to be empty when the internal gauge started to count down. When my internal fuel began to drop, I just assumed the drops were empty. Not so, one tank hadn't fed and I was on internal fuel sooner than expected. My instructor was sure I was reading the fuel gauge wrong, but after two or three checks where I came up with the same number, he decided that my read-

ings were correct. He decided that I was much lower on fuel than he was and headed us back toward the field. The next problem was how well would the F-86 land with one full drop tank and one empty one and just how much time did we have to get me set-up for my first F-86 landing. As these things usually work out, it was an uneventful landing.

"Most of our flights were at night. I don't know if that was on purpose or just a coincidence. We progressed through the training syllabus over the next 3-1/2 months extending our knowledge of the F-86 and fighter interceptor tactics. During this time there was a number of losses. One of my classmates ejected near the field and made it OK. He subsequently requested to be relieved of flying duties. Another dead-sticked his off the end of the runway and made it, but another, an Annapolis graduate, lost control of his on the base leg and went in with the bird. It was a shock for all of us, but especially me since I was number two in the flight and he was number three. When I cleared the runway, there was no one rolling out behind me and there was a large column of smoke south of the field.

"One of the things we practiced, or at least tried to practice, was Datalink intercepts. The data link system had been installed in the F-86 as a retrofit and didn't work very well. You would get a steering circle to follow or at least you were supposed to, but either you wouldn't get the circle or if you got one, it would lead you in the wrong direction. It's hard to teach the old "Dog" new tricks.

"Since we were now rated pilots and no longer students, it was expected of us that we would conduct ourselves accordingly. We were no longer under the supervision of an instructor, so what we did and how we did it was our own responsibility. One pilot taxied off the taxiway on the way to the runway one night and was found using the afterburner to try and get back up on the taxiway. He didn't make it.

"We were all given an opportunity to fly as target aircraft in the T-33s and did so to learn more about intercepts and to build time. It was the first time we had been turned loose with an aircraft since we started training 2-years before. We were usually paired up with another student and took turns flying in the front seat. It was great fun and filled-in the time between flights in the F-86. Amazing as it seems, we only logged about 90 hours in the F-86 during the training. Its hard to build time when you get it at 1+05 a flight. The old J47 was a thirsty engine and the A/B didn't help.

"The F-86 had a rather new flight control system compared with the other aircraft we had flown up to that point. When you moved the stick you actually were working against an "artificial feel system" that was a set of bungees or springs that gave you the feel of control pressures but in fact the feel was created artificially. The 3,000 psi hydraulic pressure at your disposal was what moved the flight controls and if the artificial feel failed, you couldn't fly the airplane. You would over-control it to the point of over-stressing the airframe. Joe McConnell, the triple jet ace in Korea, was killed testing an F-86H when the artificial feel failed. Another flight control problem native to the F-86D was PIO (pilot induced oscillation): the movement of the elevator had the same travel at traffic pattern speed as it had at maximum airspeed/altitude so that movement needed to control the aircraft at slow speed would throw you into a violent up and down pitching action when you were going fast. This was finally corrected by varying the amount of movement with speed, less at high speeds and more at lower speeds.

"It also had something new in fuel controls. It was completely electronic and the humid weather around southern Georgia played hell with the thing. In theory you could, on a scramble, take the throttle out of "off" and put it in afterburner at 6% rpm. The engine would accelerate on its own keeping all the temperatures and pressures in limits while you strapped in and closed the canopy. In reality we had a number of variations to the way the book described how it was supposed to work. If you had electrical problems the engine

would freeze at whatever power setting you had at the time and you had to switch to a backup inverter before you could change power settings. Then you could only get a maximum of 98% power. This happened to me in the pattern one day and the go-around was interesting. Since these old engines developed a lot of their power between 98 and 100%, there wasn't a lot of extra power available.

"Another item was the oxygen. We were supposed to go to 100% oxygen prior to starting our descent, but we had to remember to switch back to normal after a few minutes. I didn't one night and found myself unable to breathe at all because the oxygen bottle had gone to ZERO! I broke all three retaining pins on the oxygen hose connector getting the thing loose so I could breathe ambient air but was, fortunately, at a low enough altitude at the time that no harm was done.

"Radio calls always netted some interesting variations and Moody was no exception. Instead of the standard "Fox 7 initial with a flight of 3", you could also hear "Slipping smartly up the initial with one sleek, silvery, swept-wing Sabre jet!"

"We were all given a MACH ride. This consisted of climbing the F-86 as high as we could get it and then letting it accerlerate in burner to the highest Mach we could get, usually about .80, then rolling it over into a vertical dive, still in burner, and holding on as the Sabre accelerated through Mach 1.0. Usually you made it but some aircraft wouldn't, some would roll

quite violently as you went through and some days the temperature at altitude was so high that you couldn't get through. Anyway, we all qualified and received a MACH BUSTER patch, certificate and lapel pin from North American Aviation.

"One thing we never got to do was actually fire the 2.75" FFARs. This was something you didn't get to do until you were in an operational squadron and qualified to become combat ready. The rocket package was a rather unusual arrangement. You were supposed to be vectored into a 90° beam intercept and then at the last second release these un-guided rockets and break away behind the target. Hopefully, they would fan out into a shotgun pattern and some of them would hit the target.

"One instructor told me a story about them using flash bulbs to check out the firing circuits. They would attach a flashbulb to the firing mechanism in each tube then activate the firing circuit and see if all the bulbs fired. If any of them didn't then that circuit was defective and required maintenance. He launched one night as a target and they had forgotten that the flashbulbs were loaded in the tubes of the interceptor. It was cleared in for a practice run and "HOLY COW he just fired at me". It was hard to tell if they were flashbulbs or the real thing. Anyway, he made a rather high G maneuver away from the interceptor and lived to fly another day.

"My goal going through this training was to get an assignment to F-102s, or better yet F-106s. Probably the most disturbing thing to come out of the training was that regardless of how well any of us did at Moody we all were sent to fly bombers in the Strategic Air Command after F-86 training was finished. Needs of the military took precedent over all else and someone somewhere miscalculated and there weren't any slots for fighter interceptor pilots, just bomber pilots, so we packed up and moved to yet another training base and started all over again learning yet another aircraft and another job".

3555TH COMBAT CREW TRAINING WING

Known for some time as a training airfield, on 17 July 1952 Perrin Field was designated a permanent Air Force installation and became Perrin Air Force Base. The base was also transferred to Crew Training Air Force control, and in preparation for its new role training all-weather interceptor jet crews, longer 8,000 and 9,000 feet runways were built. Concurrently, the resident 3555th Pilot Training Wing became 3555th Flying Training Wing (fighter), and two flying units, the 3556th and the 3558th Flying Training Squadrons, were activated. Providing maintenance facilities for the wing were the 3554th, 3555th, 3556th and 3557th Maintenance Squadrons, plus the 3557th Field Maintenance Squadron.

The first F-86Ds (50-560 and 51-2946) arrived at Perrin on 18 December 1952 and by August of 1953 the whole wing was fully equipped. John Irwin arrived at Perrin during August 1953, and was initially

Below, 3555th F-86Ds at Perrin initially had either red or yellow tail bands depending on squadron assigned. F-86D-36 51-8277 was one of those sent to FEAF in late 1953 but never used. It was returned stateside and after Pull-Out conversion was assigned to Perrin in February 1955. (Lippincott)

assigned to T-33 instructor duties. Then, in April 1955, he finally checked-out in the F-86D:

"I still have my checkout certificate for the Dog, dated 7 April 55, signed by Captain Orland W. Jenson. About the time that I checked out in the Dog, construction began on the alert facility at the north end of the field. It had been thought that the Russians could send long-range bombers up through Mexico and into central US. We were to be the line of defense: 2 armed planes on 5-minute alert and 2 armed planes on 30-minute alert. The 5-minute alert pilots were chosen from the squadrons [instructors] with volunteers given preference."

"I liked being on alert and volunteered for a lot of the 5-minute alert shifts. Funny, but I don't remember anyone I knew ever being on 30-minute alert although it was on the books. I was certainly never asked to do so. Maybe it was staffed with higher ranks that had to be on-call anyway."

"I liked to sit in the little greenhouse on the front of the alert hanger with a good book and watch the operations on the field, especially at night. Near the end of each shift, "Utah" radar would pick out some military traffic that was passing and scramble us on them. It gave us at least one flight per shift and gave a lot of bomber crews practice in jamming us. I was scrambled on a lot of B-47s, several B-52s, and one B-36. One target I hated was the Canberra. With their huge wing area, they would slow down to a crawl and climb at a high angle, higher than we could go. We would find ourselves stalling-out while they sailed away."

"On one of my last alert flights, I was IFR, in and out of clouds, mostly in. The controller set me up head-on with a B-47, although I didn't realize it at first. When I saw the blip was coming down the scope faster than I could follow it, I broke out of there and called my wingman, about a mile behind, to break out also. On the ground we called Utah radar to gripe and found that a rookie controller had set us up while the supervising controller was in the head."

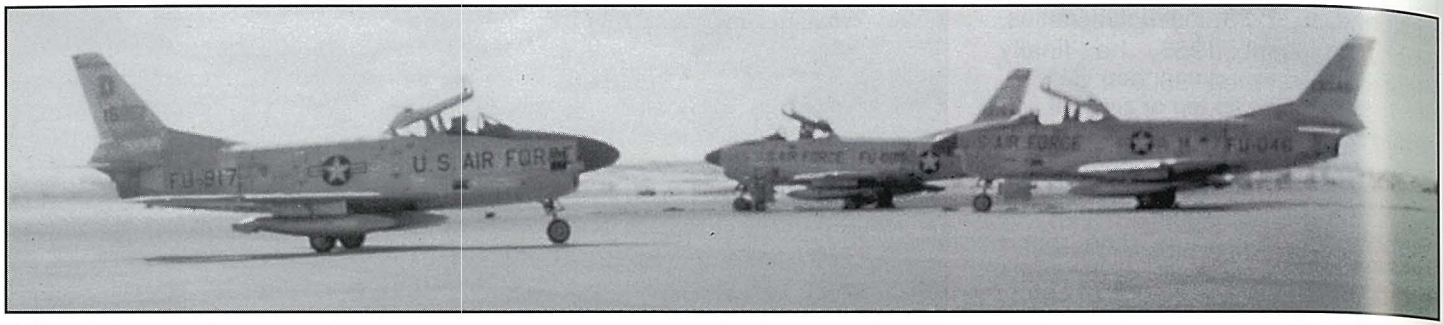
Above, most early-model F-86Ds converted to F-86L specifications were used at Perrin. 51-3129 was an F-86L-21 and carried a red tail band. Hi-viz markings replaced these rather mundane markings in 1958. (via Mike Fox) Bottom, differing slightly from convention, 51-6120 wears a red-white-blue letter 'C' on its tail. The aircraft also has da-glo nose and rear fuselage stripes. The aircraft served at Perrin until July 1962 when it was retired to Davis-Monthan. (D. Curtis collection)

In order to maintain currency with Air Force trends, the first modified "Pull-Out" F-86Ds began to arrive in February 1955 and the unmodified aircraft were, in turn, ferried out for conversion at the same time. This changeover period was largely complete by the end of May.

The next big upheaval began in March 1957 with the arrival of the first F-86L aircraft from conversion. Though the mission of the 3555th FTW remained the same, the unit now integrated the SAGE system into its training. Final F-86Ds departed Perrin in January 1958, bound for McClellan AFB.

In July 1957, Perrin was assigned to the Flying Training Air Force and in 1958 was placed directly under the Air Training Command. As a result, in August 1958, the 3555th CCTW was again redesignated, this time to become the 3555th Flying Training Wing (Advanced Interceptor). The squadron designations changed correspondingly.

F-86Ls flying at Perrin began to draw-down alongside Air National Guard F-86L withdrawal. Additionally, Perrin's aim would now be to train crews on the Century Series fighters and thus at the end of 1959 Sabres were slowly ferried out of the base. However it was not until 31 July 1962 that the final group of aircraft left, bound for storage at Davis-Monthan.



Above, the last markings 3555th wore included da-glo nose and rear fuselage stripes and outer wing panels. They also had a single tail letter to note which flight they belonged to. 51-5817 at left and 51-3046 at right have a black 'D' on their tails. The latter was one of the last Sabres lost in USAF service. It crashed on 16 February 1962 after an engine failure. 1stLt Richard Eibl ejected safely. (Isham collection)

3625TH COMBAT CREW TRAINING WING

Operating from Tyndall AFB in Florida, the 3625th CCTW was the first F-86D flying training unit, also known as the All Weather Interceptor Training School. The Wing's first Sabre (an F-86D-1) arrived on 8 July 1952 under Project TRC-1PF-869 and was followed by a further nineteen "Dash One" aircraft. From August of the same year, brand-new F-86D-5 and –10 aircraft were also assigned, and by the end of 1952, thirty-nine F-86Ds were on strength.

However, many teething problems were experienced – a result of the mix of complex aircraft and inexperienced pilots. The first loss was 50-466, which crashed 13 miles north-west of Port St. Joe after an in-flight fire on 18 September 1952. Four further crashes within a 3-month period from September 1954 raised the issue in public, especially as each crash had resulted in the loss of the pilot. On each occasion, a fuel system fault or fire was reported and the aircraft were grounded for a time awaiting resolution of the problem.

The 3625th FTW was comprised of the 3627th and the 3628th Combat Crew Training Squadrons (CCTS), the latter being home to the Interceptor Weapons Instructor School (IWIS). The IWIS began training instructors for the front-line F-86D units, and in the spring of 1954 many Tyndall-trained instructors were assigned to newly-formed Sabre Dog Wings to begin the compilation of ground and flying training syllabi for their units. In addition, many of these pilots were detailed to ferry F-86Ds into their new squadrons.

During July 1954, the first of fourteen 3625th CCTW F-86D-1s was put through conversion to TF-86D status and these aircraft served as safety chase aircraft during student intercept exercises. The life of Tyndall's TF-86Ds was short, however, and all were reassigned to McClellan AFB in May and June of the following year.

Along with the active units, Project Pull-Out affected the training Wings, and in February 1955 the first Pull-Out aircraft arrived from McClellan AFB and replaced the pre-modification aircraft on a one-for-one basis. This process was complete by November 1955.

On 25 December 1956, the first F-86L arrived, but less than ten aircraft were delivered prior to Tyndall's transfer to the Air Defense Command on 1 July 1957. At this point, the 3625th CCTW was inactivated and all F-86Ls and most of the F-86Ds were transferred to other training units.

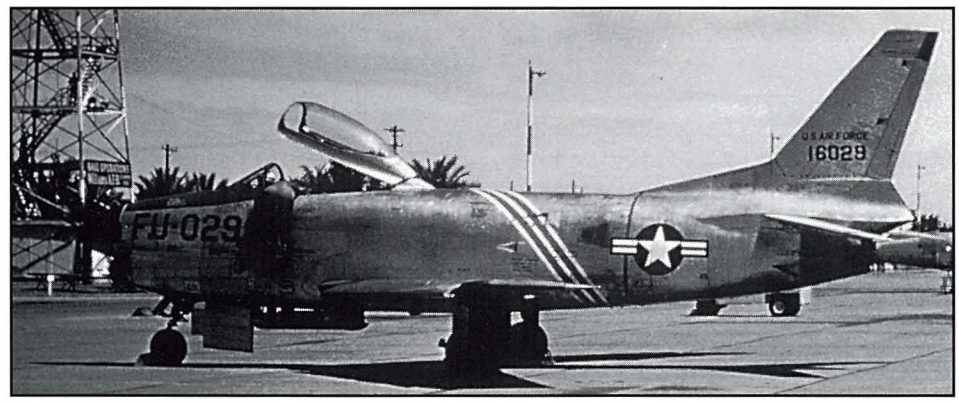
A small number of F-86Ds did remain at Tyndall though, coming under the 4756th Air Defense Wing control and continuing the instructor training process until December of 1957. At that time the F-102A replaced the last Sabres at Tyndall, and the latter were routed through modification lines prior to ANG assignment.

At right, 51-3008 served with the 3625th CCTW at Tyndall AFB from 1955 to 1957. The unit's F-86Ds wore simple "Tyndall" script on the tail, above the Crew Training AF logo. (via Jack Friell)

4750TH TRAINING WING, AIR DEFENSE WING

Sabre operations at Yuma AFB, AZ, began with the assignment on 4 May 1953 of six brand-new F-86Ds. Four dash-25s and a pair of dash-30s would form the basis of the 4750th Training Squadron, which was formed on 1 January 1954 and commanded by Korean War ace James Jabara – he had been at Yuma since August 1953. Concurrent with the activation of the training squadron, the 4750th Training Wing (Air Defense) was formed, and the Group was placed under that in the command structure, the latter overseen by Col Glenn Eagleston, also fresh from Korea. The 4750th TS was tasked with training Air Defense Command pilots in live firing of their aircraft's rocket armament and also gained a half-dozen F-94Cs. A second unit, designated the 4750th Tow Target Squadron, operated TB-29 and TB-45 aircraft from Yuma and towed banner targets for the live fire exercises. On 1 September 1954, the wing was redesignated the 4750th Air Defense Wing (ADW), group and squadron names changing to reflect this.

Yuma began hosting ADC training camps from February 1954. Concurrently, the F-86D-25s began to be replaced by four F-86D-40s and the pair of F-86D-30s were superseded by a like number of F-86D-35s in August. Annual air-to-air rocket firing competitions also commenced in June 1954, though that year the trophy was taken by Moody AFB's Starfire training unit. F-94 Starfire and F-89 Scorpion rocket training was transferred to Moody AFB in January 1955 and from that point on, only F-86D and L units would use Yuma. All eligible units would, however, return to Yuma annually in October for the Worldwide Weapons Meet.



Above, markings applied to the 4750th Training Group Sabres were generally minimal but varied greatly. F-86D-40 52-3850 was one of the more colorful aircraft with red and dark blue nose and tail markings. The aircraft was operated by the 4750th from March through September 1954. (via Isham) Below, this 4750th ADW F-86D-31 wore red and white fuselage stripes and was visiting Williams AFB in 1955. (via Isham) Bottom, F-86L-60 53-999 had white and red-trimmed tail and drop tanks with a vulture insignia on the tail. This scheme was used from 1957-58. (via Isham)

Like most F-86D squadrons, the 4750th Air Defense Squadron (ADS) replaced its pre-Pull-Out aircraft with later models, and from July 1954, six modified F-86D-31s began to arrive from McClellan AFB. The squadron was fully-equipped with the type at the end of November. These aircraft were supplemented by nine brand-new F-86D-60s during April 1955. Fifteen further F-86D-31s were assigned to Yuma from July 1955 and these, along with the earlier delivery of D-31s, were retained until March 1956.

In addition to its training role, the 4750th ADW had a chase commitment for ADC aircraft on live-fire rocket missions. These chase aircraft rode along as lookouts while the "firer" was under the hood with his head in the scope. As a result, during January 1956 the first of thirty-four TF-86D-1 and –5 chase aircraft were assigned straight from Fresno conversion. The TF-86D had all radar equipment deleted, and in many cases a metal nose cone was fitted in place of the fragile radar-transparent item normally fitted to F-86Ds. The TF-86D was ideally suited to the chase task – with all that equipment removed, it had a far better top speed than the interceptor, but retained the same handling qualities. The TF-86Ds stayed until September 1957, the D-1s going to Davis-Monthan, whilst the D-5s went mainly to Aberdeen Proving Grounds, MD, for use as range targets.

Just prior to the departure of the TF-86Ds, eighteen F-86D-31 and –41 aircraft were assigned to the 4750th ADS, coming from disparate sources. They were retained only until October of that year.

Yuma had been re-named Vincent AFB on 1 September 1956, and the remaining F-86D-60s were replaced in February 1957 by nine F-86Ls. Four of these were in turn transferred to Tyndall AFB during July 1957 when rocket firing began to be transferred from Vincent. Tyndall concurrently formed the 4750th Test Squadron, to which the quartet of Sabres were assigned. They ceased operation in May 1958 and all were transferred to the Air National Guard. Five F-86Ls remained as chase aircraft at Vincent AFB with the 4750th ADW until January 1959.

Above, one F-102 lands as another takes off and joins its F-86L chase plane. The Delta Daggers were from the 318th FIS. (Otto Loorents) Bottom, with the move to Tyndall, the 4750th continued their chase role; the only distinguishing markings were the unit badge on the tail. (via Norm Taylor)

AIR FORCE FLIGHT TEST CENTER 6510TH AIR BASE GROUP

Based at Edwards AFB in California, the Air Force Flight Test Center (6510th Air Base Group) operated a number of F-86Ds initially for Phase IV control, stability and all-weather testing. Eight F-86D-1 and D-5 aircraft were assigned to Edwards from March 1952 under AMC Project 3F-54. As with many AFFTC machines the F-86Ds were also available for test support (chase) duties, though only one from this group was a permanent chase aircraft. On 16 December 1952, 50-509 was given over to test support duties and was then heavily utilized as a chase aircraft in the Bell X-1A programe. It served in this role until March 1954.

During December 1952, F-86D-20 serial 51-2945 was assigned to Edwards for Phase IV testing, and when the majority of early-standard F-86D-1 and -5 aircraft were shipped out in 1954, it remained at Edwards as a chase plane. '945 departed Edwards in June 1956, leaving just two F-86Ds assigned to AFFTC: 53-4047 and 51-5973. 5973 was North American's JF-86D Falcon AAM testbed which was tested at Edwards from April 1956 until its departure in September 1956.

Aside from the F-86Ds, F-86K 54-1232 was also assigned to Edwards AFB for Phase IV testing.

Above, three F-86D-1s, 50-460, 462, and 469, over Southern California in March 1952. (AFFTCHO) Below, 50-462 with yellow placard reading "Air Force Flight Test Center" below the canopy in March 1952. Tail was da-glo red. (AFFTCHO) Below, 50-462 in July 1952; note da-glo outer wing stripes. (AFFTCHO)

Below, F-86D-20 51-2945 conducted Phase IV stability and control testing from 18 April through 21 August 1953 and was trimmed with red and white stripes. Maj. Robert L. Stephens and Capt. James Slade Nash were the test pilots and Robert C. Jackson was the flight test engineer. (AFFTCHO)

PATRICK AFB

Three F-86Ds were assigned to ARDC at Patrick AFB for missile chase duties, notably on the X-10 Navaho programe. At least two of these aircraft were heavily instrumented and featured prominent nose booms and datalink antenna atop the nose section.

First to be assigned was 50-474, which arrived from modification at Inglewood on 19 October 1956. Like the other Sabres employed at Patrick, 50-474 was designated as a JF-86D test aircraft, and was joined by similarly-configured 50-462 in October 1957. The third Sabre assigned was 50-463, which arrived from ground instruction duties at Chanute AFB on 19 October 1957. Though also assigned the JF-86D designator, it is not known whether this aircraft carried the nose boom; it had not been through modification at NAA prior to delivery.

In December 1957, 50-462 was fitted with equipment that enabled the aircraft to take control of errant missiles if need be, so that destruction or steering away from populated areas was possible if ground control was lost. As such it was temporarily redesignated as a JDF-86D, signifying its "controller" configuration.

These aircraft were heavily utilized at Patrick AFB until March 1959, when 50-462, by then the last remaining Sabre at Patrick, was ferried out to Davis-Monthan. (Detail photographs of 50-474 are presented in Vol.1)

Above and below, JF-86D 50-474 was a missile test aircraft assigned to Patrick AFB, Florida, on 5 October 1955. (National Archives) Bottom, after transfer from Edwards AFB, 50-462 was redesignated JF-86D and painted white when seen at Davis-Monthan AFB on 17 May 1959. Aircraft was instrumented for X-10 Navaho flight test missions. (B. Burgess via Bob Dorr from Norm Taylor collection)

ROME AIR DEVELOPMENT CENTER, GRIFFISS AFB

Based at Griffiss AFB in New York state since 1951, the Rome Air Development Center (RADC) was involved in developing equipment for the SAGE network. From November 1955 RADC was assigned three JF-86Ds from modification at NAA, comprising 51-3006, 53-1040 and 53-1042 under ARDC Project 6F414. These three were among the first machines fitted with intercept equipment that was later standardized on the F-86L.

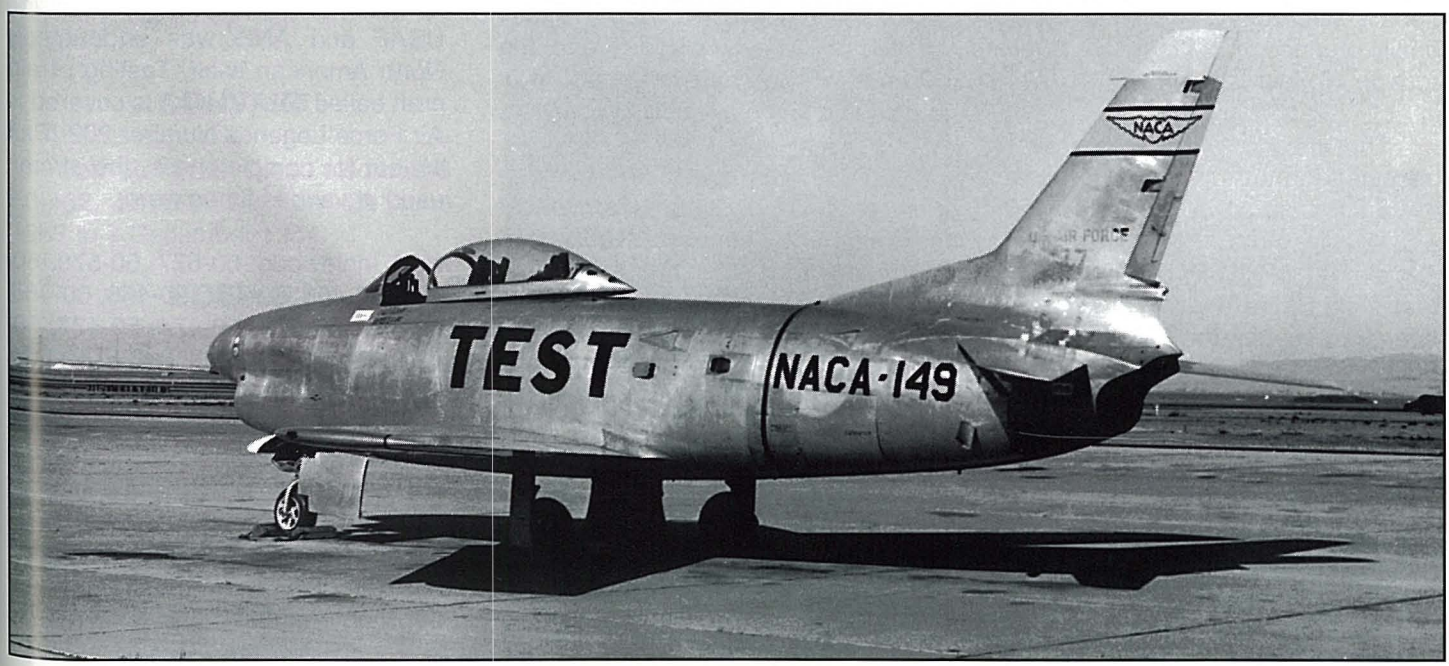
RADC developed the ground-based AN/GPA-37 Radar Course Directing Equipment and on 28 December 1955, the first operational data link test flight took place, using one of the unit's JF-86D aircraft. An eight-month test program was undertaken at Griffiss after which all three were reassigned to the Cambridge Research Center at Hanscom AFB.

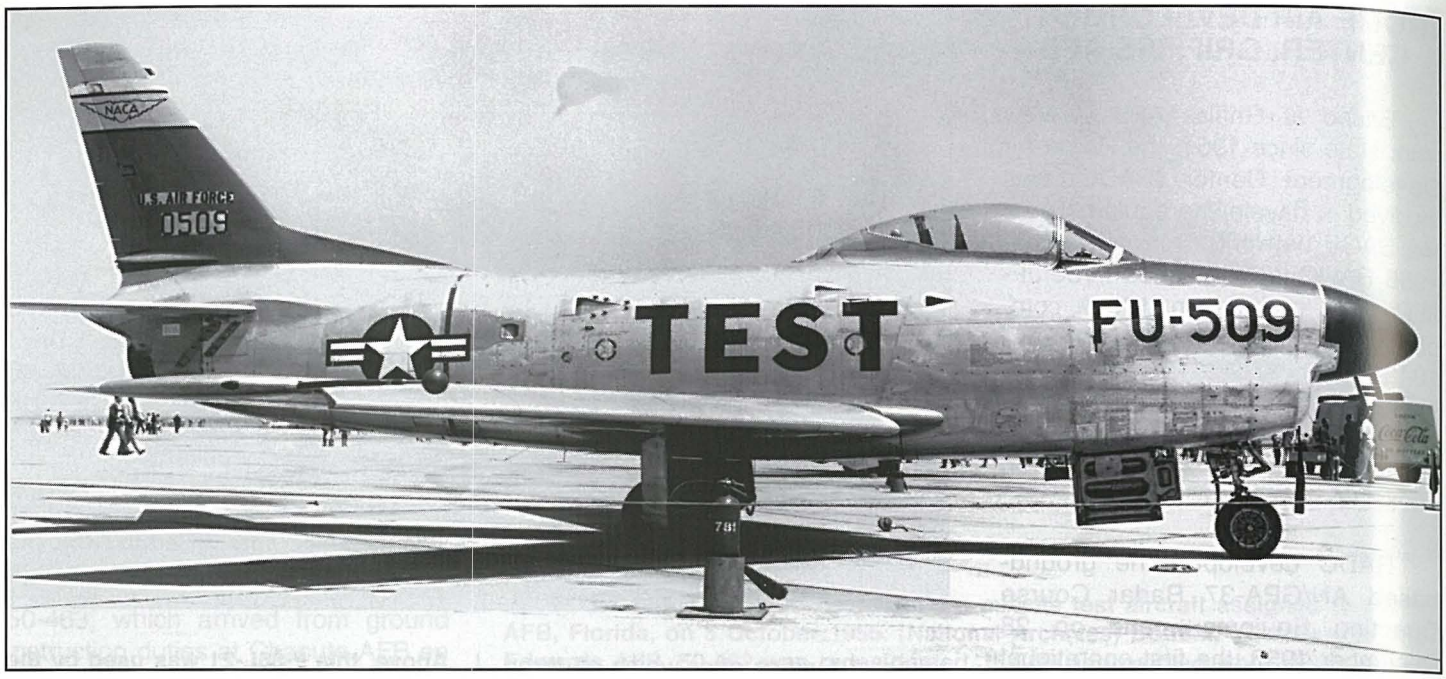
Above, this F-86L-21 was used by the Rome Air Development Center used on SAGE testing from March through August 1956. (D. Curtis collection)

NACA/NASA

The National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA) utilized a number of F-86Ds for research work. These aircraft were based at two sites: the Ames facility at Moffett Field in California and at Langley in Virginia. Fittingly, the first "Dog" assigned to NACA was the first YF-86D, s/n 50-577. At the end of June 1952, still fitted with a low-set tailplane, the No.1 machine was assigned to Ames, where it was re-serialled as NACA 149. The aircraft was then employed on control sensitivity research, and in 1955 a J34 engine was fitted along with the high-set tailplane for a series of wind tunnel tests to prove the blown flap concept. The J34 engine provided high-pressure air, which was then exhausted over the extended wing flap to increase boundary layer adhesion and lower the theoretical stalling speed for a set flap selection. Installed in the Ames 40 by 80-foot

Below, wearing prominent "Test" markings, NACA 149 was the first prototype YF-86D and was equipped with an all-metal nose cone and instrumentation probe. The NACA tail band was yellow outlined in black. (Gordon S. Williams)





Above, in 1956, 50-509 was transferred to NACA in 1955. It had previously served as the Bell X-1 chase aircraft at Edwards AFB. Aircraft had a red-orange tail with a yellow NACA tail band above. (L. Smalley via Swisher)

wind tunnel, NACA 149 had modified flaps fitted, which embodied full-span slits where the high-pressure engine air was exhausted. These slits could be shimmed to adjust the orifice size, though large variations in slit size were found to have little effect on performance. These tests were completed on 9 September 1955 and proved that significantly less air was required to maintain laminar flow over the flap than had been estimated. The aircraft was not flown in this configuration, but analysis showed that the system could have been installed easily into production Sabres. NACA 149 enjoyed a long test life after completion of this flap experiment - it was finally dropped from the NASA inventory on 15 February 1960.

The second YF-86D also was assigned to the Ames facility, though it wasn't given a NACA number. 50-578 arrived at Ames on 16 September 1952 and it seems likely that this Sabre then served as a spares resource for the other YF-86D.

Next aircraft to arrive was 51-5986, a standard F-86D-30 which flew-in straight from the factory on 4 June 1953. Unlike most of NACA's F-86Ds, '986 was routed through Pull-Out conversion in September 1954, returning to service at Ames in January 1955. It was then employed in tests to determine tracking performance of its fire control system (FCS) in tail chase attacks. The F-86D's FCS was of course designed to cope with beam attacks. Released from NACA use in November 1957 the aircraft was briefly stored at Davis-Monthan AFB, but was then routed through NAA at Inglewood and passed to the Japanese Air Self Defense Force in June 1958.

Other Sabres assigned to Ames were 50-509 and 53-787. The latter was given the NACA serial number 216 and took part in a number of Control System Tie-In (CSTI) presentations from March 1955. CSTI proved an effective addition to the Sabre's fire control system and was modified into most F-86Ds in service.

50-509 was one of the longest-served NACA Sabres. It arrived at Ames on 6 January 1955 and became NACA 205. On 6 April 1956, the aircraft was reassigned to the Langley facility and served there until removed from service on 12 July 1960.

Langley operated two other F-86Ds: 50-459 from June 1954 to May 1960 (as NACA 204) and 51-5959 from March 1956 to September 1958. The latter, an F-86D-31, was only on temporary loan and was never assigned a NACA number.

NACA was re-named the National Air and Space Administration (NASA) on 1 October 1958.

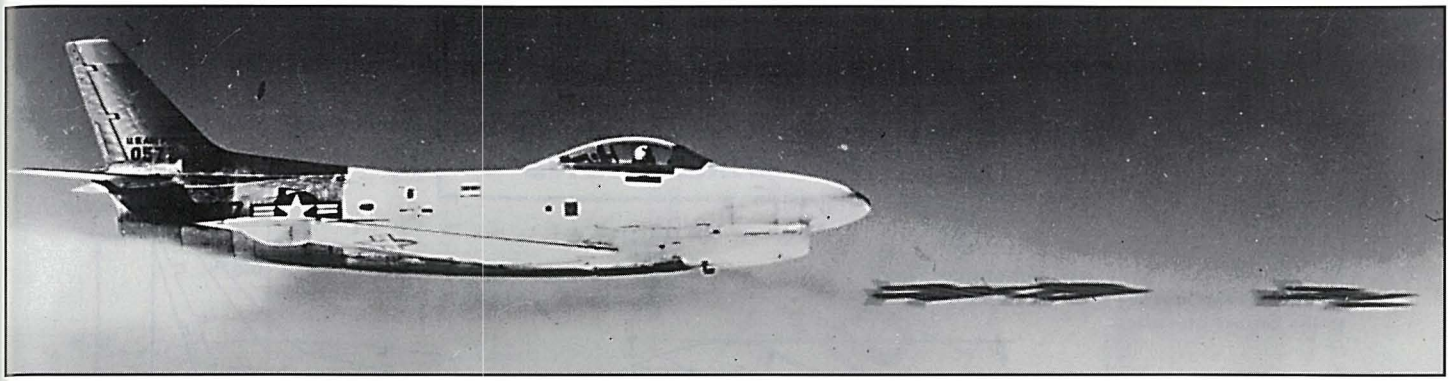
F-86Ds BAILED TO CIVILIAN COMPANIES

Main user of F-86Ds outside USAF and ANG was undoubtedly North American itself. Testing of aircraft bailed back to NAA is covered in Air Force Legends Number 202 (Part 1), but for completeness, the aircraft used at various times were:

NAA Inglewood: 50-577, 50-578, 50-455, 50-456, 50-457, 50-458, 50-466, 50-471, 50-473, 50-474, 50-477, 50-492, 50-493, 50-494, 50-495, 50-554, 51-2944, 51-2949, 51-5938, 51-5973, 51-6009, 51-8447, 52-3598, 53-557, 53-1030, 53-1042, 53-4047 and 53-4061. (see Air Force Legends # 202)

NAA Fresno: 51-2974 and 51-3006.

NAA Electromechanical Division, Downey: 50-462.



HUGHES

A number of F-86Ds and F-86Ls were assigned to civilian companies for test or chase aircraft duties. Hughes at Culver City was the first company to be bailed an F-86D, receiving 50-578 on 17 October 1950 for testing the company's fire control system until returned to NAA in May 1952. Hughes' use of bailed F-86Ds is also covered in Part 1, but for completeness it borrowed three other aircraft: 50-473 from July 1953 to July 1955, 51-6146 from September 1953 to February 1954 and 53-557 from March 1955 to April 1957.

GENERAL ELECTRIC

On long-term loan to General Electric, 50-480 was based at Edwards AFB for J47 testing from 15 July 1952 until eventually tested to destruction there in March 1958. The previous January it was redesignated NF-86D, signifying special test, on bailment.

CONVAIR

Convair at San Diego also bailed 50-462, an F-86D-1 from 29 June 1953 to 7 December 1954.

BOEING

At Seattle, Boeing was allocated two F-86D-31s (51-6104 and –6121) in October 1956; these were re-designated JF-86D for the purpose. Boeing used these aircraft until January 1958 when they were returned to Inglewood. The company also briefly used 51-6093, an F-86L from 12 March to 16 May 1962 for an unspecified test.

RCA

RCA at Camden, New Jersey, also bailed an F-86L, 52-4234, from 11 July 1957 to 27 January 1960. Though the nature of the test is not known, the aircraft was redesignated as a JF-86L on 29 July 1957 and based throughout at New Castle County Airport in nearby Delaware.

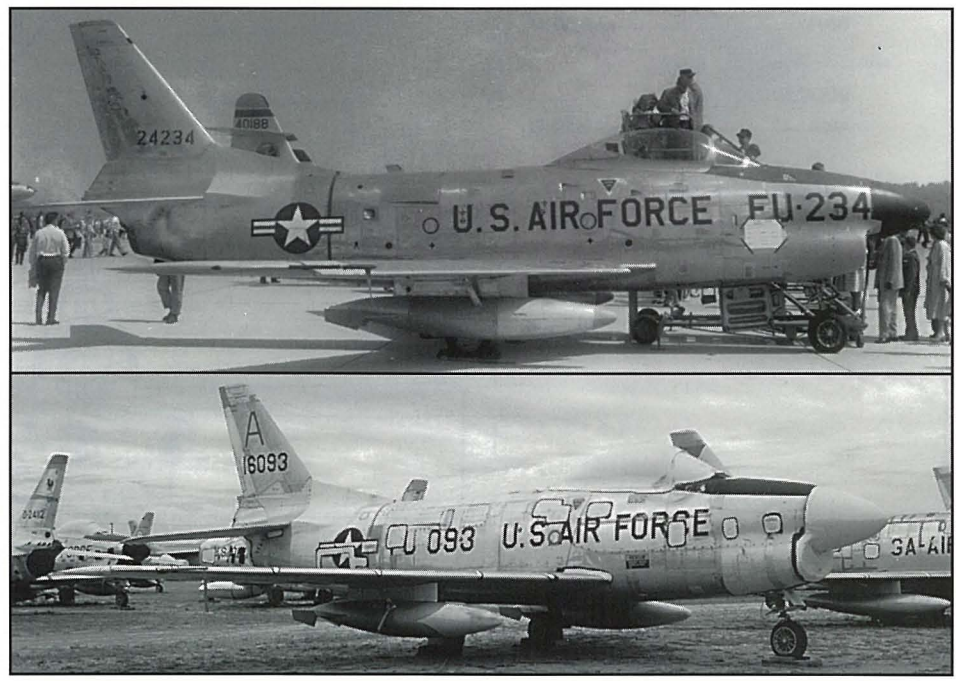
CAMBRIDGE RESEARCH CENTER

The largest operator of F-86Ls on bailment was the Cambridge Research Center (CRC), based at Hanscom AFB in Massachusetts. CRC was a department of Massachussetts Institute of Technology and was responsible for inventing and developing the SAGE system used by the F-86L. From May 1956, two modified F-86Ds began operating with CRC, followed by the loan of sixteen or more F-86Ls from 49th FIS, beginning in January 1957. Most were retained until late 1958, though 52-3680 was unique among these aircraft in being retained by CRC. Re-designated as a JF-86L in December 1959, it was scrapped at Hanscom the following month.

Above, Hughes operated 50-578, seen here firing rockets. The aircraft's forward 2/3rds of its airframe was painted da-glo red. (Hughes) Below, 52-4234 was the sole Sabre bailed to RCA. As a JF-86L, it carried high-viz markings. (JMG Gradidge) Bottom, 51-6093 was bailed to Boeing for two months in 1962. "A" on the tail was in red. (Jack Friell)

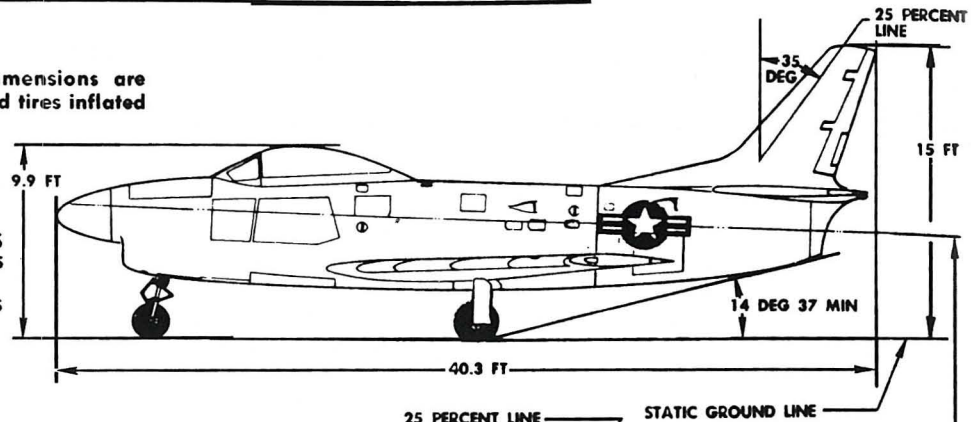
DOUGLAS

Final civilian company to bail F-86Ds was Douglas at Santa Monica. Douglas used JF-86D 51-8282 from 29 June 18 October 1954.



AIRPLANE DIMENSIONS

NOTE Airplane principal dimensions are taken with the landing gear and tires inflated to the correct pressures.

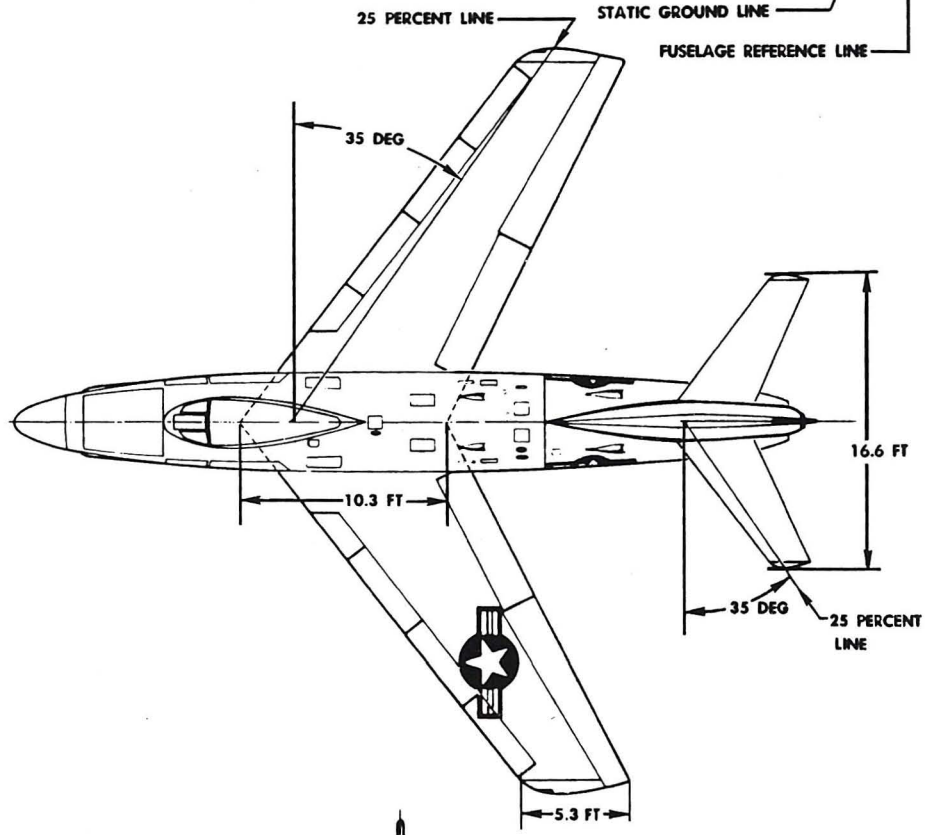


APPROXIMATE GROSS WEIGHTS

CLEAN AIRPLANE	18,760 POUNDS
WITH TWO 120-GAL DROP TANKS	20,550 POUNDS

WING

AIRFOIL	
ROOT	NACA 0012-64
TIP	NACA 0011-61
INCIDENCE	
ROOT	+1 DEG
TIP	−1 DEG
ASPECT RATIO	4.8
AREAS	
WING (INCLUDING FLAPS, SLATS, AND AILERONS)	287.9 SQ FT
AILERONS (BOTH)	32.9 SQ FT
FLAPS (BOTH)	32.9 SQ FT
SLATS (BOTH)	35.4 SQ FT



HORIZONTAL STABILIZER

AREA (MOVABLE PORTIONS ONLY)	30.9 SQ FT

VERTICAL STABILIZER

AREA (EXCLUDING DORSAL FIN)	31.0 SQ FT

RUDDER

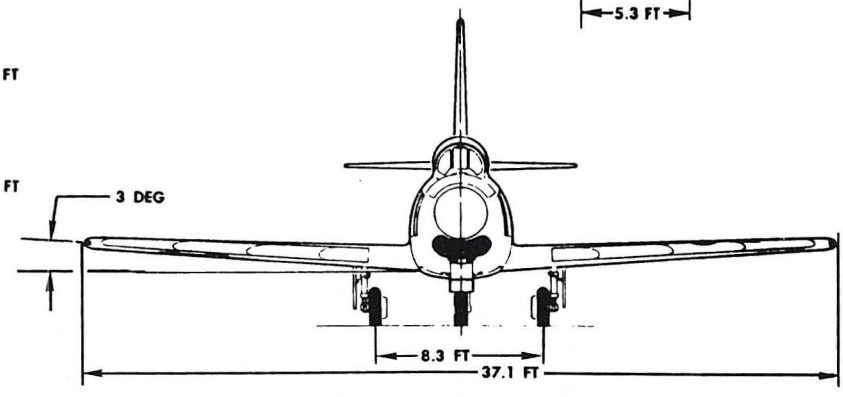
AREA	5.3 SQ FT

RUDDER TRIM TAB

AREA	0.58 SQ FT

SPEED BRAKE

AREA (EACH EFFECTIVE FRONTAL AREA)	5.42 SQ FT



F-86D-3-00-69

1/72 Scale

F-86Ls and late reworked F-86Ds received the longer 39' 1" wing

16024
97
FU-024

23836
FU-836 U.S. AIR FORCE

24185
FU185
U.S. AIR FORCE

24151
U.S. AIR FORCE
FU151

18377
U-377
U.S. AIR FORCE

FU-722 U.S. AIR FORCE

24140
FU140
U.S. AIR FORCE

FU-944 U.S. AIR FORCE

FU-677

FU-032 U.S. AIR FORCE

U.S. AIR FORCE

FU-866